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# The History of Big Bend Township

Chippewa County, Minnesota

From the time of its first settlement in 1866 to the close of the  
year 1928

A RECORD OF SIXTY-TWO YEARS

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By J. K. Johnson

AUG 27 1967

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year 1991

A RECORD OF SIXTY TWO YEARS

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BEND TOWNSHIP

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BEND TOWNSHIP

Report from the Allen County

THE HISTORY OF THE TOWNSHIP OF BIG BEND  
BY J. K. JOHNSON  
PUBLISHED BY THE TOWNSHIP OF BIG BEND, IDAHO  
1917

For several years past the question has often been put to me, "Why not write the history of Big Bend?" For a time I did not take this suggestion seriously believing that someone in the township would be in a better position to do this work. However, being a native of the township and desiring very much that its history should be written and preserved, I finally decided to make an effort to secure all the data possible about the early settlers and their accomplishments, and, while far from being complete, the result of my efforts are herewith appended.

In this undertaking I have made no attempt at rhetorical display and effect, but in the plainest language possible have described the events which make up the history of the township. I have encountered many difficulties in the undertaking, because the majority of the pioneers have passed on, and the second generation that I have appealed to for assistance in the matter have been too busy to delve into the history of their forebears.

The main object of this work is to furnish the present generation a faithful record of the events from the earliest settlement by white men. How well I have succeeded I will leave to the reader's judgment. I can only hope that this record may be received by the readers of The Standard in the same charitable spirit in which it is written.

To the few who have aided me in furnishing the facts and data within their knowledge, I express my sincerest thanks. Among these are Edward Hagen, Ed. A. Solseth, Henry Anderson, Rev. E. I. Strom, Ole Paulson, Andrew Bromstad and Ole H. Blom, of Worley, Idaho.

—J. K. Johnson.



## WHEN BIG BEND LAND SOLD FOR 2½ CENTS PER ACRE

It may not be out of place to start the History of Big Bend with a resume of the earliest history of this part of the great Northwest. If we read the earliest history of the middle west we find, for instance, that the Mississippi Valley country was claimed by France by right of discovery and exploration. Then, by reason of certain European complications the whole tract of land, known to the world as the Louisiana country, was ceded to Spain in 1762. On October 1, 1780, it was ceded back to France. France held it but a short time and sold it to the United States, the treaty being signed in Paris April 30, 1803. The price paid amounted to TWO and ONE-HALF CENTS PER ACRE.

Although purchased in 1803, the formal surrender of Upper Louisiana did not take place until 1804, so that on March 8, 1804, Minnesota land belonged to Spain. On the 9th it belong to France and on the 10th it was the property of the United States. In three days upper Louisiana belonged to three different nations. Since that event we have belonged successively to the following: 1804, "District of Louisiana." July 1, 1805, "Louisiana Territory." December 7, 1812, "Territory of Missouri." June 28, 1834, "Michigan Territory." July 3, 1836, "Iowa Territory," and March 3, 1849, "Minnesota Territory."

But the real owners of these fertile lands were not, however, the United States government, but several tribes of Indians that inhabited it, as will be noted by the following brief account.

## THE RECEDING INDIANS

Prior to 1851 practically all of that vast stretch of territory lying between the Mississippi river and for many hundreds of miles westward belonged to the Indians—the original Americans. But in that year several treaties were made between the United States government and the Indians, whereby large tracts were relinquished by the latter to the American government. Governor Alexander Ramsey and the Honorable Luke Lea, commissioner of Indian affairs, were appointed by President Fillmore to arrange with representatives of the Dakotah tribe of Indians for the purchase of as much land west of the Mississippi as they should be willing to sell.

Accordingly, on the 23rd day of July of that year, a treaty was concluded and signed by the Chiefs whereby they ceded to the United States government all the lands east of Bois des Sioux and Big Sioux rivers and Lake Traverse to the Mississippi, except a reservation on



the upper part of St. Peter (now Minnesota) river, which covered a territory one hundred miles long by twenty miles wide and embracing some of the most fertile lands in the Northwest. A week later, or about the 29th of the same month, another treaty was drawn up and signed by practically all the Chiefs of the various bands of the Sioux, ceding all their remaining lands in the territory of Minnesota and northern Iowa to the United States government. Congress, in special session, immediately ratified the treaties, whereupon President Fillmore issued a proclamation accepting, ratifying and confirming all of the said treaties as amended. The total lands, thus acquired and lying wholly within the borders of the territory of Minnesota, exceeded 19,000,000 acres.

Having relinquished so much of their favorite hunting ground the Indians gradually withdrew to some of their reservations, others moving farther west. Some of them, however, were surly and refused to abide by the terms of the treaty, and subsequent history tells us that for many years thereafter the truculent and fiery redskins were a source of terror and constant menace to the scattering white settlements in the territory.

#### PRIMITIVE CONDITIONS IN THE SIXTIES

Not longer ago than 1866, the territory in which the township of Big Bend is located, was an unbroken wilderness. Not a single white man then had a habitation within its borders. The solitude of nature was broken only occasionally by some hunter and trapper, and by wandering bands of Indians. The buffalo, the elk and the deer had for ages roamed its wild prairies and woodlands; fishes had basked undisturbed in its lakes and rippling streams; the muskrat, the otter and the mink had gamboled upon the ice in winter with no white man to molest them. Ducks, geese and other aquatic fowl, in countless numbers, covered the lakes and streams in summer, and chattered and squawked and frolicked in all their native glory and happiness. The prairie wolf howled upon each little hillock, and, cowardlike, was always ready to attack and destroy the weak and defenseless. Pocket gophers went on with their interminable underground operations, all unconscious of the inroads soon to be made upon their dominions by the farmer. Grouse and prairie chickens cackled, crowed and strutted in all their pride. Blizzards and cyclones swept unheeded across the vast domains.

The autumnal prairie fires, in all their terrible grandeur and weird beauty, lighted the heavens by night and clouded the sun by day.

Age after age had added alluvial richness to the soil and prepared it to be one of the most productive fields of the world for the abode of the husbandman, and for the use of civilized man.

The inquiring and philosophical mind, at times, finds food for reflection in the fact that an overruling Providence sent the Pilgrim Fathers first to the rockbound coast of New England to clear the forest and to settle the country, but reserved the rich and productive prairielands of the West, ready for the plow and mower, for that horde of immigrants from the British Isles, Scandinavia, Germany, France and the other European countries.

It is a pleasure to record the early settlement of a community which for sixty-two years has never suffered a total failure of crops, and where general thrift and prosperity, for all that time, have attended and rewarded the hand of industry and the spirit of frugality.

Where the gladdening sunlight nestled,  
Where all nature's beauty slept,  
Unrevealed to cultured vision;  
Where the Savage will'd and wept  
When his son or sire had given  
To the spirit of world his breath;  
Find we here a famous region,  
(Sunny side of Minnie's face)  
With lovely lakes and richest soil,—  
A healthy home for sons of toil.

#### TOWNSHIP 119, RANGE 41

Township one hundred and nineteen, north, range forty-one, west, is that portion of Chippewa county now known as Big Bend township. Nearly seven years after the advent of the first settlers, the first board of commissioners of Chippewa county, met at Montevideo on March 18, 1874, organized the township and directed that a meeting be held to elect officers for the township. Accordingly an election was held at the home of Hans P. Blom, on April 7, 1874, at which time the following officers were elected: Ole H. Blom, clerk; N. K. Hagen, treasurer; Joel Woods and C. H. Blom, justices; H. H. Norby and H. S. Anderson, constables; H. S. Anderson, G. H. Blom and K. K. Hagen, supervisors.

There seems to be no record of how the name "Big Bend" came to be adopted as the name of the township, but the fact that the Chippewa river makes an elbow bend at a point where it enters sec-



tion nine is prima facie evidence that this is responsible for the name "Big Bend."

### THE PIONEER

Let others tell of the heroes  
Who fought where the sabres gleam,  
Where the blood of the thousands fallen  
Has reddened the flowing stream.  
Let others tell of the courage  
Displayed in the clash of war,  
Where armies mingle in battle,  
And the cannons belch and roar;  
I bring you a thought in honor  
Of those whom my heart reveres;  
I sing of a nation's builders—  
The dauntless pioneers.

There were lonely days on the frontier,  
Times when the world seemed drear,  
Tasks that were hard to master,  
Dangers that thrilled with fear;  
But those were the men with a purpose,  
And a courage that did not fail,  
And the long line never wavered  
As it followed the westward trail.  
Many the tributes we owe them,  
Men of passing age,  
They leave us a hallowed mem'ry,  
The richest of heritage.

Men with the pioneer spirit,  
You who have blazed the way,  
Helping to build an Empire,  
Willing your part to play;  
Hopeful and strong and stalwart;  
Rugged and brave and true,  
Proudly we sing your praises,  
Gladly we honor you.  
Here is our hand in greeting,  
Looking across the years,

Pledge of the debt we owe you—  
You who were pioneers.

—Unknown Author.

### THE FIRST BONA FIDE SETTLERS

It is perhaps well enough to say here that the plan of this work is to give the name of all the very early settlers, for a few years, and then give the events that are of public interest as they transpire. This may require a little more space, but The Standard has kindly consented to overlook any eccentricities that an amateur writer may have, and to publish the history as written.

One bright sunshiny day, about the middle of June, 1866, a "prairie schooner" could have been seen slowly wending its way westward over the treeless and trackless prairies of Chippewa county. The occupants of the wagon were Mr. and Mrs. Hans Golden and daughter, Mina. Trailing the wagon were a few cows and some young stock. Following in the rear of this procession were Lauris, Ludwig, John and Sveinung Olson, a young "Telemarking," who made the trip in the company of the Goldenes. If a human eye could have followed their movements it would have seen that they came to halt several times during the afternoon, the elder Golden getting out of the wagon to make observations and to "get the lay of the land." Finally, towards evening, they spied a fringe of trees, about a mile away. When this was reached the elder Golden shouted "whoa" to the tired oxen, the bolster squeaked as the oxen swung sideways, the hind wagon wheel dropped into a hole that had been dug up by a badger or some other burrowing animal—and stopped. The long and tedious land-hunting trip was over, as succeeding events prove. According to the oral declarations of the late L. O. Golden, the spot where the first stop was made was inside what later became the present boundaries of Chippewa county, but the land homesteaded by Mr. Golden lies in township 120—Westbank township, Swift county, so that, while the Goldenes were, as a matter of fact, closely identified with the social and economic interests of Big Bend and her people for more than half a century, they would probably have been excluded by some other historian, but this writer feels that the Goldenes rightly belong in a history of this character.

The writer had the opportunity several times of listening to the late L. O. Golden's recital of the memorable trip made in a prairie schooner in the year 1866, when they came west, and he will quote



from memory some of the interesting incidents of the trip and the first years in the new country: "Father was born near Christiania, Norway, in 1819 and mother near Fredrickshald in 1820 and were married there in 1851. The three oldest children, Mrs. S. Olson, Ludwig and myself were born in Norway, and the two youngest, Mrs. Ole Paulson and John, were born in Goodhue county, Minnesota, to which place we came in 1861. In 1866 father decided to move west and secure free government land, and accordingly, about June 10, we started out. The company consisted of father, mother, brothers Ludwig and John, sisters Mina and Anna, Sveinung Olson, his brother Aane and sister Turi. The trip was long and tedious. For a few miles after leaving St. Paul we saw signs of a settler here and there, but we could not have traveled more than twenty or thirty miles before we were out on the barren and endless prairies. Occasionally we would see an antelope and a few deer and sometimes a small band of Indians scurrying over the prairie. At this time of the year, it was pleasant to be out in the open, and we did not suffer. Only at night did we experience discomfort and that on account of the bothersome mosquitoes. If I remember correctly, the trip occupied exactly 14 days. There was no railroad west of Minneapolis, the first railroad, the Minneapolis, Manitoba and St. Paul railroad being built three years later. Our first home was a dugout where we lived the first few years. We broke a few acres that first summer and our first crop was harvested in 1867—by cradle. Our nearest town was New Ulm, in Brown county, one hundred miles away, and it was there we had to go for our flour and other provisions; the time required to make this trip was more than two weeks. In the fall of 1867, father and Sveinung Olson started out to make the trip to New Ulm and had proceeded as far as the southeast corner of Big Bend, where the round hill is located, when suddenly father spied a bear. The bear retired to its hole in the hill. 'We must get that bear,' said Sveinung. 'How?' asked father. Sveinung had an axe, and with this in hand took a position near the entrance to the bear's hole. The bear, scenting trouble, was in no hurry to come out, but finally came. Sveinung was ready for him, and just as he stuck his head out of the hole, Sveinung buried the axe in the bear's neck. They loaded the bear on the wagon and returned home, and we had bear meat all winter. This is probably the only 'bear story' ever recorded in Big Bend. Antelope was, however, quite plentiful the first few years and father shot one or two. In 1867 and '68 a few settlers came, but we were pretty much isolated from the outside world the first few years.

When I look back and see the great changes that have taken place I can hardly realize that it is the same country. During the first ten years of our residence in the west game of all kinds was plentiful; there were prairie chickens and ducks and geese by the thousands, and brother Ludwig and I spent much time hunting. Fur bearing animals, such as muskrats, minks and coons were also plentiful, but there was no market for them. While I appreciate the comforts we have today, I cannot forget that life in the wilds had its entrancing features. Indians would visit us occasionally, but they were always friendly."

All the Golden's, save Mrs. Olson and Mrs. Paulson, have been gathered to their fathers. Hans Golden died in 1892, Mrs. Golden in 1909, Ludwig died in 1910, John about the year 1922 and Lauris 1927.

#### THE ANGRIMSONS

The first actual settlers in Big Bend were Knute Angrimson and his father, Angrim Knutson. Both were born in Norway, the former in the year 1841. In 1866 they came to America and settled in Fillmore county, Minnesota—the mecca for a large number of Norwegian immigrants. In 1867 Knute Angrimson, in company with his father, Angrim and his young wife—who was Dorteia Hoverud before her marriage and who was born in Valders, Norway, and who came to Fillmore county about the same time Mr. Angrimson did—came west into Chippewa county. Their first homesteads were located just across the line into Swift county. A short time later he sold his "rights" to Ole K. Hagen and filed on another homestead in section 34, Big Bend, the description being the E½ of the NE¼, the SW¼ of the NE¼ and NW¼ of the SE¼, section 34. This land is cut in two by the Chippewa river, the object of the earliest settlers being to locate where wood and water were available. Try to visualize, if you can, the conditions existing when the Angrimsons came to Chippewa county. They came in a covered wagon, drawn by oxen, and it required several weeks to make the trip—a trip that can be made today in cushion-backed and easy riding automobiles in less than ten hours. The last outpost to any semblance to civilization was left behind when Fort Ridgely was passed. From that time on the trip took them over trackless prairies; they forded streams, swollen by recent rains; they detoured around big sloughs and had great difficulty in keeping their drove of cattle together. On the Minnesota bottoms, south of the present village of Sacred Heart, they ran into a small drove of deer, who "took to their heels" at first sight of the strange



caravan and disappeared over the hill. Many years later, in talking about the deer, Mr. Angrimson said: "I had a muzzle-loading gun back in the wagon, and when I spied the deer I hurried to get the gun, but before I could get around they were out of range. I never saw any living thing run so fast."

Mr. Angrimson's first house was constructed of logs, notched together at the corners; the building was shingled with basswood troughs; the crevices between the logs and troughs were chinked together with prairie grass and then daubed, or plastered, with mud. The floor was the bare ground. There was no lumber in the country nearer than New Ulm, and such a cabin was all that could be constructed with the materials at hand.

Mr. and Mrs. Angrimson were the parents of the first white child to be born in the township. He was named Albert, and was baptized by a Rev. Markhus, of New London, who came to the sparsely settled settlement occasionally the first years to look after the spiritual needs of the struggling settlers. This important phase of the history of the township will appear under another heading of this work.

Knute Angrimson lived to be nearly eighty years old. He died in November 1919. He was a strong character, strong of body and tremendously active throughout his entire life. The original homestead continued to be the home of the family as long as Mr. and Mrs. Angrimson lived, and is now the home of their son, Anton. Besides the old homestead, Mr. Angrimson added to his land holdings, until, at the time of his death, he was the owner of more than six hundred acres. Most of this land is now owned and farmed by their sons, Anton and Ole, is highly developed and considered some of the finest farms in the township.

#### COMING OF THE "TELEMARKINGS"

Hans P. Blom emigrated with his family from Kviteseid, Telemarken, Norway, in the year 1854, arriving at Whitewater, Wisconsin, during the latter part of August in the same year. Two years later he, with several other families, moved into Minnesota and bought a farm at Highland Prairie in Fillmore county. In May 1869, having had glowing reports of the fertile lands in the Minnesota valley then open to homestead entry, he sold his Fillmore county farm and prepared to move westward again. Several of his neighbors, having been smitten with Horace Greeley's advice "to go west," decided to make the trip in company with Mr. Blom. Accordingly a caravan consisting of several covered wagons, or prairie schooners as they were called, was made ready for the trip to the "Promised Land." One

bright, sunshiny day in June the start was made: they "gee'd" and "hawed" and swung the whip over the strong oxen that made up the motive power for the trip. Eventually the crooked trails that had been followed for several miles became less and less noticeable and soon they were out on the treeless and trackless prairie wigwagging their way westward—and ever westward. The landseeking company consisted of the following persons with their families: Hans P. Blom, Gunder H. Blom, Paul H. Blom, C. T. Blom, Anders Ness, Andreas Ness and Ole H. Blom, the minor son of the first named. On America's independence day—July 4th—the caravan came to a halt near the east bank of the Chippewa river "somewhere several hundred miles from the old home in Fillmore." The next day a reconnoitering party was made up and the quest for homes began. Hans P. Blom bought the "rights" to a quarter section in 34, held by Sondov Aleckson for his brother. Gunder Blom staked a claim—the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  in section, 26, Paul Blom the SE $\frac{1}{4}$  in section 22, C. T. Blom the SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 26, Anders Ness the NW $\frac{1}{4}$  and Andreas Ness the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of the same section. Anders Ness sold his claim a short time later to Mrs. Margit Mickelson and sons, John and Charles. Andreas Ness sold to Isaac Syftestad. Ole Blom, being too young to make homestead entry at that time, returned in the fall to Forest City, Iowa, where he remained till in the fall of 1871 when he again came to Big Bend. In the meantime C. T. Blom had relinquished 80 acres of his holdings as 80 acres was all that anyone could get under the homestead laws at that time. Although only 20 years old at the time, Ole Blom filed on the N $\frac{1}{2}$  of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ . But nobody knew his age and he "got by" with it. Tollef Storaaslie filed the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 22, but traded his claim in 1872 to John Folkestad for a farm in Freeborn county and went back there to make his permanent home. Jens Oftelie located on the NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 22, but sold a few years later and went to Waseca county, his original American home. In 1871 Ole Storaaslie located on the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 14, but sold his claim the same year to Lars Halvorson who had just arrived in Big Bend. Mr. Storaaslie was also from Highland Prairie in Fillmore county. John Toxen and Henry Olson located in section 24 in 1871. John Sandland located in section 24 in 1873. G. P. Blom, a brother of Hans P. Blom, located in section 32, Kjostov Knutson in 28, Hans Nordby and Frans Carlson in section 20. All these were from Highland Prairie and came in the early part of 1870.

The above make up pretty nearly the entire list of "Telemarkings" that came to Big Bend in the later part of the Sixties and the early



part of the Seventies. Most of them had been neighbors in Norway, where they were born, and they had been neighbors in Fillmore county before coming to Big Bend. In the "Bygd" of Kviteseid, Telemarken, their ancestry can be traced back many hundreds of years. More so than in almost any other part of Norway, they were an enlightened people, honest, upright and "true as steel." It is said that Telemarken has produced more writers and poets than all the other parts of the Scandinavian peninsula put together. One Norwegian writer insists that "Telemarken is capable of supplying the entire world with poets and still have enough left for the home needs."

To the writer's best knowledge only two of the above bunch of early pioneers are still in the land of the living. They are Ole H. Blom, now a resident of the state of Idaho, and his sister, Mrs. Mattson, living on the original Ole Blom homestead in section 26.

In connection with this phase of the early history of Big Bend, the writer cannot resist the desire he has to quote a paragraph from the history of Chippewa county, written by the late Lyeurgus R. Moyer. The article is headed "The Telemarkings" and reads as follows:

"Among the mountains and valleys of southern Norway, along Langesund Fjord, and back of Kragero, lies the ancient province of Telemarken. In Telemarken the oldest church is known as Kviteseid church and its history dates back to 1180—to the time of St. Olaf. The Lutheran church in Milan is named after the church in Telemarken.

"It was from Telemarken that some of the earliest settlers of Chippewa county came, and they have proved to be an enterprising thrifty people. Congressman Andrew J. Volstead, of Granite Falls, is a Telemarking. His parents were from Hitterdal, but he was born in Goodhue county, this state, in 1860. He had been a school teacher in his younger days. He began the practice of law in Lac qui Parle in 1880, removed to Granite Falls, was county attorney for 16 years and has served so long and well in congress that he seldom has any opposition.

"Thea Hasselberg, the deputy county auditor at Granite Falls, is the daughter of a Telemarking. She is highly regarded by all who know her. The Fjeldstad family in Stony Run and the Rollefson families in Montevideo are descendents of an old Telemarking family, and the Hauglands of Watson, as well as the Hon. O. Haugland, of Montevideo, are relatives of them on the mother's side. They all have been successful businessmen and have been successful in America.

"Ole Jacobson Haugland was one of the earliest settlers in Chippewa county. He was born at Flaabygd, Telemarken, in 1831. He was married to Gunhild Syftestad, one of the Fjeldstad family, whose ancestry has been traced back for more than three hundred years. They came to Fillmore county, Minnesota, in 1862 and to Chippewa county in 1867, taking land in section 22, in the town of Tunsberg, near the old Chippewa crossing. They found the river high and had to use a wagon box for a ferry. They suffered from Indian scares and from lack of food. It is said that they got some boards for their first shack from some old buildings at Lac qui Parle, perhaps from the old traders' posts.

"In the winter of 1868 Mr. Haugland started on skis by way of Big Bend and Buffalo lake for the land-office at Greenleaf to file on his claim. He depended on the wind to keep his course across the great trackless prairie; but the wind changed and a blizzard came up, and Mr. Haugland was hopelessly lost for two days and two nights. He circled around the prairie, but at length reached the Black Oak timber and made his way to Frink's, where Montevideo is now located, more dead than alive. Mr. Haugland's eldest son is a lawyer in Montevideo. The other two boys have the old farm, and Susanne is married to Christian Kantén, an enterprising and progressive farmer of Big Bend.

"Ole Torgerson Rø came from Risør. He settled first at Big Bend but moved south into Tunsberg two years afterward. He named the township and the post-office, and was a member of one of the first boards of county commissioners. He was highly respected by all who knew him. He served the county well. He protested against extravagance, but found his protest unheeded, so he felt compelled to resign. He is still living, but his venerable figure is seldom seen in public places now.

"Knute Angrimson came to Fillmore county in 1861, and to Chippewa county in 1867. He took land in section 34, in Big Bend township, where he still lives. He has several very large farms now, and his sons are large farmers in the same neighborhood.

"Knut Knutson Seim, from Hitterdal, and his brother, Ole, the watchmaker, came to Tunsberg in 1868. Knut took land in section 35 and had a long lawsuit with the railroad company before he got his title established in the courts. Ole went to Iowa for a time, but returned to Chippewa county in 1870, and worked at his trade.

"Other prominent Telemarkings were Jorgen Peterson Bo, the old schoolmaster, his son, Jorgen Bo, who sold machinery for so many years; Erick Halvorson Otterholt, the big farmer of Big Bend; Kje-



til Halvorson Otterholt, brother of Erick, who called himself Charles Halvorson, who was a merchant in Dawson and Montevideo and who became a state senator and a member of the board of control. Kjetil Augunson Siverhus, of Leenthrop, and his sons and daughters; Aaste Bo, widow of Jorgen Bo, and who is a sister of Charles Halvorson; Nils Nilson Aamot who came over on a sailboat in 1868 and was eight weeks on the Atlantic, and who settled on section 6 in Tunsberg; Kjetil Ingebrigtsen, or Johnson, who settled a few miles south of Montevideo; John K. Fosse who lived close to Montevideo; Hans Reiersen Versland and Reiar Reiersen Versland; Grave Brothers, in Montevideo, the rising young merchants; John Rue, who farms in the Chippewa valley just outside of Montevideo; Mrs. Solseth, widow of the pioneer pastor; Anders Hansen Evenskaas, the old violinist, whom everybody loved; Tom Torgerson, of Watson; the Swenningson boys, of Montevideo; Thorbjørn Anderson, the elder, who lived near the lake in Kragero; Thorbjørn Anderson, the younger, the banker, capitalist and all round business man of Milan; Aslak Anderson, the big store keeper at Milan; Torjus Lundevall, of Greenbush; Christopher Blom, cashier of the Bank of Milan; Gunder Paulson Blom, one of the earliest settlers of Big Bend; Gudmund S. Lia and his son, Sven; Gudmund E. Landvik, the tailor; Hans K. Strand; Halvor T. Kleven and his brother, Stener; Halvor Sweno, one of the old settlers and many others around Milan.

"Sigurd Borgerson came to America in 1842, with the first emigrants from Telemarken. He was born in Hoilandsmo. He settled first in Coon Valley, Wisconsin, but moved to Chippewa county about 1871 and took a claim in Leenthrop. Sigurd was six feet, six inches high and weighed three hundred and eighty-six pounds. He was married to Ingeborg Lindevik from Laardal. Ingeborg's weight was two hundred and eighty-eight pounds. They were the heaviest couple in Minnesota. Sigurd was everybody's friend, and is well remembered by all the old settlers in the county."

Since Mr. Moyer's history of Chippewa county was written Ole Torgerson Rø, Knute Angrimson and Mrs. Aaste Bo have all passed away. Torgerson died in 1914, Mr. Angrimson in 1919 and Mrs. Bo in 1916.

#### HANS ANDERSON

Hans Anderson was one of the very early settlers in Big Bend, where he homesteaded in section 34. Mr. Anderson was born in Norway, where he grew to manhood and married. His wife was Anna Hendrickson, a native of the same "Bygd" in Norway. They were

both born in the same year—1825. In 1866 they immigrated to America coming to La Crosse, Wisconsin, where they remained for two years. Toward fall in the year 1868 they started out to look for a home, and, having heard of the fine lands in the Minnesota valley, came direct to Chippewa county. Here they found a desirable piece of land in section 34. They made the drive westward in a covered wagon and with a yoke of oxen. As they were unable to load all their belongings on the one wagon they billed some of it by steamboat to St. Cloud. Going to St. Cloud in the fall, he arrived there only to learn that, owing to the low stage of the water, steamboat traffic was laid up. He proceeded to St. Paul, loaded his goods and again set out over the bleak prairies for his home in Big Bend and his loved ones awaiting him there. The distance thus traveled was more than 650 miles—a feat that was equalled by few.

Mr. and Mrs. Anderson were the parents of eight children, among which is Henry, the present owner of the old homestead.

Mr. Anderson continued to till the land he homesteaded for a great number years, and prospered. At the beginning of the present century he and Mrs. Anderson went to North Dakota to live with their son, Carl. Here Mr. Anderson died in 1908, 83 years old. Mrs. Anderson died in 1901.

It was always said of Mr. and Mrs. Anderson that they were a congenial and hospitable couple. They never turned a deaf ear to a worthy and needy fellowman. Through the years constituting the formative period of the township they did all in their power to help build up the country. They were charter members of the Immanuel Lutheran church in Tunsberg and were always deeply interested in church work. The younger generation remember the venerable old couple as the incarnation of all that is good and true.

#### HENRY ANDERSON

Henry Anderson, fourth child of Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, above referred to, was born in Norway and came here with his parents at the age of nine. He grew to manhood on his parents' farm, and in 1889 married Miss Mattie Skogrand, sister of the late J. H. Skogrand, a pioneer in the township of Mandt. In 1885 he went to Pierce county, North Dakota, where he filed on a homestead and remained for ten years. In 1895 he returned to Big Bend and bought his old home. Prior to this he had bought some railroad land in the township of Tunsberg so that he now owns and farms nearly three hundred acres. A visit to the Anderson farm will convince anybody that the



original Anderson homestead has, indeed, been under the care of a progressive man. The buildings are modern, lawn well kept, with a fine grove of shade and fruit trees surrounding it. Mr. Anderson is a progressive in politics, a good citizen and a good neighbor.

Mr. and Mrs. Anderson have five children living, one of whom—Elodie Gracia—is married to Heber Golden, grandson of the first settler in the Big Bend territory, Hans Golden. These families, now so closely connected by marriage, are carrying on the work that their forebears started in the wilderness of Big Bend and Westbank townships.

#### EARLY SETTLERS IN SECTION 36

Aanon Haugen settled in section 36 in the year 1875. This being a school-land section, Mr. Haugen bought the land from the state.

Ole Arneson bought the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , later selling this land to Gilbert and Albert Angrinson.

Hans Nelson bought the SE $\frac{1}{2}$  of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$  where he lived for a number of years, or until his death which occurred a few years ago.

Aanon Haugen sold his land to Tore Haugen (no relative) who farmed it for a few years, later selling the farm to Arne Breiseth.

#### THE HOOSIERS

The only Hoosiers to ever settle in Big Bend came in the early part of 1870. George T. Woods settled in section 2 and homesteaded the land now belonging to John Jenson Skau. Joel Woods, Henry Woods and Marvin Hull homesteaded in section 12, the latter's farm being the same that was purchased in 1890 by A. F. Teigen. Lofty cottonwoods, planted at the intersections of sections 1, 2, 11 and 12 stand there today as silent testimony to the activities of the eastern "Yanks." The first country school to be built in Big Bend was built in the northeast corner of Joel Wood's farm. Whether or not the Woods' and Hulls' liked the neighborhood in which they lived, all their neighbors being Norwegians, the fact remains that after a few years residence there they again "broke camp" and went west into Washington Territory, since which time their old Big Bend neighbors have heard nothing concerning them. The only ones to remain were Joel Hull and brother, Alvin. Alvin continued for a few years to operate the old farm, but was killed when a horse he was riding stumbled and fell over him. Joel Hull was for many years a resident of Benson where he was engaged in the livery business and at which place he died some years ago.

## NILS, OLE, KNUT AND AMUND HAGEN

This quartet of brothers were born and raised in Christainsand Amt, Norway. Here they were educated and here they remained until they were grown men. Amund was the first of the brothers to emigrate, coming to the United States in 1860. Nils and Ole came in 1861. Knut was a sailor and sailed "the seven seas" for a number of years, or until he tired of this life and become a citizen of Uncle Sam. All the brothers settled first in Waseca county, where they remained for a few years. Amund was the first of the brothers to go in quest of a homestead, and he came to Big Bend in 1867—a little later than the first settler, Knut Angrimson. Amund Hagen settled on the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 27, which remained his home till his death in 1910. Nils and Ole came out to Big Bend in the summer of 1868 and staked claims. In the spring of 1869 a caravan consisting of Nils and Ole Hagen, Gabriel Gabrielson and Johannes Tvedt set out from Waseca county in covered wagons to make their homes in Big Bend. They were accompanied by their families and had a few pieces of farm machinery, such as plows, harrows, etc., a few milch cows and some young stock with them. Their first residences were "holes in the ground" or dugouts, as they were commonly called. Nils Hagen's homestead was located as follows: The S $\frac{1}{2}$  of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 4. Gabrielson located on the W $\frac{1}{2}$  of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 3. Ole Hagen and Johannes Tvedt located north of the present division between Swift and Chippewa counties and so became residents of Swift county. Knut Hagen came a little later and filed a homestead in section 2—the N $\frac{1}{2}$  of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ .

Nils Hagen was married in Waseca county in 1866 to Miss Kari Einerson, a daughter of Endre Endreson, another Big Bend pioneer. Mr. and Mrs. Hagen were the parents of the following children: Knut, who was born in Waseca county, and at present register of deeds of Swift county; Hannah (Mrs. Gustav Swenson) residing in Wisconsin; Sivert N., professor in English at the Franklin-Marshall college, Lancaster, Pennsylvannia; Edward, who owns and runs the old Hagen farm; Albert, of Kremlin, Mont., Gena, at home with her mother, and Nellie (Mrs. J. Shellum) of Fergus Falls.

Mr. Hagen died in December 1922 at the age of 83 years, and his passing was the signal for real and sincere sorrow in the community where he had labored so long and where he had done so much in a social, intellectual and spiritual way. He was one of the organizers of the Big Bend Lutheran church, the first meeting for the organization of the congregation being held at his home. The heritage he



leaves can never be overestimated. He was a true type of the Viking spirit—brave, courageous and optimistic. He never forgot the fatherland, yet he was the type of American citizenship that fosters loyalty to the institutions of the land in which he choses to make his home.

### SONDRE THORSLAND

Sondre Thorsland was born in Telemarken, Norway, in 1825, where his forebears had been landowners and farmers for generations past. When Sondre had reached man's estate he decided to come to America to seek his fortune. From reports coming from people of his "Bygd" who had preceded to the "land of promise," he reasoned that it would be easier to make a livelihood in America, and so he started out. This was in 1866. When he landed in Dakota county, Minnesota, he had but \$3.00 left in his pocket. In 1868 he married the sweetheart of his boyhood, Miss Ingeborg Haugesmo, and the next year—1869—they packed all their earthly belonging in a wagon covered with canvas and drawn by a yoke of oxen and started to drive westward. Their objective was "145 miles west of St. Paul." One afternoon, just as the sun was disappearing in the western horizon they came to a place "just east of a river" where they decided to unyoke the oxen and camp over night. Well, they stayed there that night, and many more nights after the first one. The fact is that Mr. Thorsland liked "the slope of the land" so well that he decided to find out whether the land was open to homestead entry. It was. Here, then, on the south half of the northeast quarter of section 10, they lived to the end of their days. From the little log cabin that he built during the first year there emerged good, substantial buildings. The land was broken and farmed, giving ample sustenance to the growing family.

Mr. Thorsland was a rather quiet, unassuming sort of man; but he was always ready and willing to help when some civic project came up for consideration and settlement. He was one of the charter members of the Big Bend Lutheran church and did his bit in organizing and building the fine house of worship, located on the N½ of the NW¼ in section 2, built in 1887, and which is still in use.

Mr. and Mrs. Thorsland were the parents of seven children, viz: Caroline (Mrs. John Asp), Ole, Ragnhild (Mrs. Oscar Nygaard), John, Hans, Sophie and Oscar. Mr. Thorsland died in May, 1908, and Mrs. Thorsland died a few years ago.

Aslak Aaneson and wife Tone were also homesteaders at about the same time that the Thorslands came. They homesteaded the N $\frac{1}{2}$  of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$  in the same section. This land they farmed and improved and also worked some railroad land in section 11. In the fall of 1890 they removed to Swift county having bought some school land in the town of Westbank. Here they remained until their death, Mrs. Aaneson passing away in 1915 and Mr. Aaneson a few years later. Their eldest daughter is Mrs. Peter Baardson and lives on the original Aaneson homestead in Big Bend.

The S $\frac{1}{2}$  of section 10 was homesteaded by a Mr. Skogstad in 1871. Mr. Skogstad sold this land to Andreas Fredrickson, who remained a resident of Big Bend until 1894 when he sold his farm to E. P. Alstad and went to the state of Tennessee to live. A year later, however, Mr. Fredrickson and family returned to Minnesota and bought a farm in the town of Westbank, Swift county, where they lived until their death a few years ago. Both Mr. and Mrs. Fredrickson were much interested in church work and were strong pillars of the local church throughout their lives. Their son, Carl, continues the management of the farm in Swift county.

#### LARS HALVORSON

Lars Halvorson and wife, Ellen, were natives of Norway, being born near Christiania, where they grew to manhood and womanhood and where they were married. In 1871 they emigrated to America and came direct to Big Bend. Here, in section 14, they bought a relinquishment to the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Ole Storaasli and of which they later made final proof. Mr. Halvorson also bought the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  in section 13 from the H. and D. railroad company and for a few years carried on farming operations on a large scale. Their only son and child, Halvor Larson, bought a farm in section 14 and for a great many years continued its operation. Mr. Larson died a few years ago and was at the time a resident of Milan. Mrs. Lars Halvorson died at the beginning of the century and Mr. Halvorson a few years later.

#### INGEBRIGT AND LARS ODDAN

Ingebrigt and Lars Oddan (brothers) were born in Trondhjem, Norway, and came to the United States about 1880. They located in section 23 on what was then railroad land. This they later purchased from the railroad company and improved it with good, substantial buildings. The Ingebrigt Oddan farm is still the property of

Mr. Oddan but is rented, Mr. Oddan making his home with his son, John, who is cashier of the First State Bank at Watson. The Lars Oddan farm is owned by his son, Ole.

### OLE GJERSET

Another early settler of Big Bend, who was well known and greatly respected in the community was Ole Gjerset. Mr. Gjerset was born in Romsdal, Norway, where he spent his young manhood days and married. Contrary to the lot of most of the young men of his neighborhood, Mr. Gjerset received a good education and for several years taught school in his native land. In 1871 he with his family emigrated to the United States coming direct to Big Bend, where he, in section 8 filed a homestead. Here he built a small frame house and at once set to work to break the sod and plant crops. Later Mr. Gjerset obtained a tree claim on which was planted a large grove of trees. The farm remained the family home until 1891 when Mr. Gjerset's son, Magnus, became the owner. Since that the younger Gjerset has continued the cultivation of the farm, has erected large and commodious buildings, planted a fine grove of fruit trees and thus made it one of the choicest farms in the township.

To Ole and Karen Gjerset were born the following children: Ole, Oluf, Soren, Knut, Gurianna (Mrs. J. Shellum) Magnus, Amelia (Mrs. Ole Erickson) Albert, and Caroline (Mrs. T. Wollan). Ole was for many years a successful merchant at Watson, where he died about the year 1911. Oluf is a well known attorney at Montevideo where he has practiced his profession since 1891. He has served his county as attorney, his city as city attorney and has twice been elected to represent his district (the 18th—Chippewa and Lac qui Parle counties) in the state senate. Soren is deceased, Knut is a professor at Decorah Luther College at Decorah, Iowa, and a noted historian. Gurianna is deceased, Magnus lives on the home farm, Albert lives in Minneapolis and Mrs. Wollan lives at Moorhead, this state.

Mr. Gjerset died at the home of his daughter in Watson in the year 1899 and Mrs. Gjerset died in 1904.

### KNUT OLSON

Knut Olson (Nesja) was born in Valdres, Norway, in 1840. About the year 1868 he left his native land and came to Fillmore county, Minnesota, where he was married. In 1872, Mr. and Mrs. Olson came west and settled on a homestead in section 28, Big Bend. Here he built a small log house and lived for a few years. In 1880 having



bought a quarter section of land in section 20, they took up residence and lived there continuously until their death some years ago. Mr. Olson came from a strong and longlived people, most of his ancestors on the paternal side reaching the near-century mark. This was a valuable asset to the American emigrant, Knut. From the very time Olson first settled on virgin soil, he was continually "in the harness," always working and improving his home. When the vicissitudes of pioneer life is being described to the younger generation they often express wonder that the pioneers were able to go through it and retain their health. But Mr. Olson was of Viking blood, very likely a descendent of the ferocious and searoving Vikings of the early Norwegian history. Be that as it may, Mr. Olson never was sick in all his long life (he lived to be 91 years old) and never sought the advice of a physician.

During his long residence in Big Bend Knut Olson kept busy and acquired a great deal of property, being at one time the owner of about seven hundred acres of land, all in Big Bend. This land was later divided among his sons, who continue in the footsteps of their father as agriculturists.

#### OLE E. EINERSON

Ole Einerson was born in Sogn, Norway. After emigrating to the United States he lived for a few years in Waseca county, Minn. In the year 1870 he, in company with his parents, Endre and Unni Endreson, came to Big Bend and located on a homestead in section 22, which he developed from a raw unbroken prairie into one of the best improved farms of the county. He continued to farm until the year 1910 when he sold his farms to his sons, Isaac and Oscar. The last years of his life were spent at Milan where he died in 1914.

In 1873, Mr. Einerson was married to Miss Guro Amundson, a sister of the well-known Chippewa county sheriff, A. I. Amundson, and to them the following children were born: Synneva, wife of J. O. Kallstrom, Ida, widow of the late Henning Grundstad, Emma, wife of Christian Jorgenson, Ella, wife of Henry S. Blom, who lives in Milan, Henry, now a resident of Canada, Isaac, who owns part of the old Einerson farm, and Oscar, a resident near Milan.

Mr. Einerson was a genial personality, happiest when he was busiest. He was one of the charter members of the Immanuel church in Tunsberg and served his church as "klokker" for a great many years. He also served as Norwegian parochial teacher and was always interested in the education of the growing generation. He was

also clerk of Big Bend township a great many years and never lost an opportunity to advocate the election of capable and honest men to public office. In the early days the Minerson home served as "Half-way Inn" for people traveling between Lac qui Parle and Benson, the old cross country road coming within a few rods of his house.

### ELLING JORGENSEN

Both Mr. and Mrs. Elling Jorgenson were natives of Norway and emigrated to the United States in 1866, and were married that year in Rice county, Minnesota. This was their first American home. In the year 1869 they moved westward and located in section 14, Big Bend, where Mr. Jorgenson filed on eighty acres of government land—the S½ of the SW¼. In the year 1880 he moved to section 16 where he bought more land and where he continued to make his home till his death in 1914.

As pioneer builders both Mr. and Mrs. Jorgenson were of the type that succeeds. They gave untiringly of their time and talent for the development of their community, playing a major role in the activity of the Big Bend Lutheran church of which they were charter members. They raised a family of eight children, namely Mrs. Anna Molden, of Swift county, Joe, who owns the home farm, Martha (deceased), Christ, living in section 15, Johanna (deceased), Simon (deceased), Johan (deceased), Edward (deceased.)

The writer, remembering Mr. Jorgenson's loquacity when the subject of pioneer days were mentioned, will quote him as follows: "We came west in a covered wagon drawn by a yoke of oxen, and the trip from Rice county consumed nearly three weeks. Of course, we had no good house to move into and the first I did was to make a dugout in the hillside. Little by little, step by step, the new home began to assume a more cheerful aspect. The first summer I broke five acres of virgin sod which the following spring was seeded to wheat. The first crop was harvested by cradle. The wheat was No. 1 hard and came out of the threshing machine as clean as though it had been put through a fanning mill. The railroad was built that year (1869) through Benson so that market was only about 25 miles away. However, a flour mill could not be reached closer than 50 miles away—New London. The mosquitoes were a pest in the summer-time, often times being so thick that the cattle would bellow with pain and go chasing over the prairies. Winters were often severe, and the most awful blizzards would come suddenly and continue for several days at a time. At such times it was foolhardly to venture out.

There were days when it was impossible to get to the stable to feed the stock. That was 'in the good old days.'

Mr. Jorgenson was a genial personality and exemplified the piety, the patience, the endurance, the industry, the frugality, the honesty and the sound judgment so characteristic in many of the pioneers of Big Bend.

#### ANDREW PEDERSON AUSTERUD

Andrew Pederson, the "village blacksmith," came to Chippewa county during the year 1878. When a boy of 12, back in his old home in Norway, he started to learn the blacksmith trade, and, owing to his youth, his father had to get a block of wood for him to stand on so that he could reach up over the anvil. His first shop in Hagan was built a few rods north of his present shop and this was destroyed by fire. His present shop is one of the landmarks, having stood there for nearly half a century. It has been said that Joshua Foss was the first blacksmith in Montevideo and that Andrew Pederson was the first blacksmith in the north end of the county. Andrew, as he is familiarly called, can pound a ploughshare and make it do better work than any other blacksmith. Although past the fourscore years old, Mr. Pederson is almost daily found in his shop pounding the iron and whistling a tune. He lives in a comfortable home just across the road from his shop and his daughter, Hattie, keeps house for him. Besides Hattie he has four other daughters—Mrs. Dan Torgerson, Mrs. Carl Quam and two daughters living in North Dakota. His wife died several years ago. Mr. Pederson is also an accomplished violinist and enjoys, even now, playing a "tune" for his friends that come and visit him.

#### GABRIEL GABRIELSON

Gabriel Gabrielson belongs to that band of pioneers who came to Big Bend before the seventies, specifically in 1869. He and family immigrated to Waseca county the year before. When Mr. Gabrielson settled on an "eighty" of government land in section 4, there was nothing but an unbroken wilderness in all directions. During the daytime we were always confronted with solitude, said Mr. Gabrielson at one time. And in the evening, after sunset, the only signs of life was the hooting of the night owl and the croaking of the frogs in surrounding sloughs. Many years later, when Mr. Gabrielson was wont to reminisce over pioneer-day conditions, he would say: "No, we did not exactly tread on roses, during our first years in Big Bend. (We lived in a dugout, which was warm in winter but which



would leak through the roof when it rained. The nearest town was Benson, 22 miles away, and the nearest gristmill was New London, about 50 miles distant. The few neighbors were just like brothers and as long as one of them had flour or other provisions the others did not lack for food—they divided everything in a brotherly manner. I may be 'old-fashioned'; nevertheless I cannot help longing back to the old days when sociability was so free and easy and when neighbors did not threaten trouble when a cow or a horse happened to get into the wheat field of the other. Of course, the conveniences of to-day are much to be preferred to the conditions existing at the time that we were newcomers here, and yet the old sociability seems to have disappeared with the advent of civilization."

Mr. Gabrielson was married in Norway to Ragnhild Austinson. In 1868 they came to America and lived for a year in Waseca county. As stated, they came to Chippewa county in 1869 and remained here the balance of their lives. They were the parents of the following children: Elizabeth, Austin, Randi, Martha, Rachel, Gurina and Caroline.

Austin, the only son of Mr. and Mrs. Gabrielson, was a boy of 12 when they came to Big Bend. He has witnessed the transformation of a wilderness where Indians and Buffalos roamed, to a civilized and prosperous community. He is the owner of his father's original homestead and has also purchased additional land. This farm is now under the supervision of Merriam Gabrielson, only son of Mr. and Mrs. Austin Gabrielson, the latter having retired from active farm work and are living at Montevideo.

#### AUSTIN HAGEN

Austin Hagen was born in Suldal, Norway. When a young man he emigrated to the United States and settled first in Waseca county. About the year 1869 he came to Chippewa county and filed on the N½ of the NE¼ of section 10. This he developed and farmed for 15 years, selling to Ole and John Asp in the summer of 1883. Asp brothers remained on the farm for six years. In 1890 they sold to O. K. Oddan, the present owner.

After retiring from the farm Austin Hagen, who never married, made his home with his sister, Mrs. G. Gabrielson, until his death which occurred in 1897. Mr. Hagen was a very interesting conversationalist, and the writer is sorry that he never took the time to jot down some of the interesting anecdotes told of the early days in Big Bend.

## CHRISTIAN I. KANTEN

Christian I. Kanten is a native of Hadeland, Norway, being born there in the year 1853. When a lad of 11 he came with his parents to America, the family settling in Fillmore county where they lived for five years. In 1869, they came west and settled on a homestead in the township of Tunsberg. Here the subject of this sketch grew to manhood and in 1880 married Susanne Haugland, daughter of Ole J. Haugland, one of the first settlers in Chippewa county. The year of his marriage Mr. Kanten bought the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 17 in Big Bend, the land being the same that was originally homesteaded by Anders Bakken, one of the early settlers of the township. Mr. Kanten has been an exceedingly energetic man and has added to his original farm several hundred acres of land. With the aid of his four sons this land has been developed and made to "blossom like a rose." His sons who have become owners of most of Mr. Kanten's land, are some of the leading farmers in the township. Mr. Kanten's "original farm"—the old Bakken homestead—is one of the best developed farms in this part of the state; it has a set of buildings that challenges comparison and the buildings are surrounded by a fine grove of shade trees and also a fine grove of fruitbearing trees. If Mr. Bakken were to come back and look for his Big Bend homestead it is a pretty safe bet that he would be somewhat nonplussed in finding it.

Mr. Kanten, besides being a good farmer, is keenly interested in all civic matters. He and family are active members and supporters of the Big Bend Lutheran church.

## OLE PAULSON

Ole Paulson has always been one of Big Bend's foremost citizens. Coming to Big Bend, as he did, in the early seventies, he has spent the greater part of his life here and has been an ardent and enthusiastic worker in the social, economic, educational and religious development of the township. He is one of the three charter members of the Big Bend Lutheran congregation still living. It was he who made the motion at that March meeting, held at the Nils Hagen home in 1880, that a building committee be appointed to look after and superintend the erection of a church edifice, and it was at his suggestion that the matter of the location of the church be deferred to a future meeting, when, at one of the meetings held, considerable controversy arose over the site selected. The ultimate settlement of the question proves that the course was wise. Any matter affecting the general public requires thought and deliberation.

Mr. Paulson was born in Telemarken, Norway, in 1849. When a boy of eight his parents emigrated to the United States and settled in Dane county, Wisconsin. When Ole had reached his majority he came to Chippewa county and homesteaded eighty acres of land in section 18, Big Bend. Soon thereafter he established a general store on the Cottonwood creek which he conducted for several years. In 1878 he bought the Overson homestead in section two and also more land adjoining it and for the next twenty-two years devoted his time exclusively to farming. In 1901, he again embarked in the general merchandise business, this time at Hagan. This business he sold twelve years later and retired to the farm where he is now spending his declining years.

Mr. Paulson was married in 1880 to Anna Golden, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hans Golden. To them were born the following children: Tillie, who is the wife of R. M. Detrichs, of Ladysmith, Wis., Paul H., who owns and works part of the farm; Emma, wife of Isaac Einerson; Hannah, wife of Sam E. Asp; Emilie, widow of the late Carl H. Halvorson and engaged in the mercantile business at Big Bend City; Dora, wife of Carl A. Anderson; Lillian, wife of Alvin Evenskaas, and Gerhard, a farmer of the vicinity.

Mr. Paulson can look back on a busy and well-spent life. His struggles in a pioneer country have been rewarded by economic independence. Although Mr. Paulson is rather small of build, he is "wiry" and very active, and now, at the age of eighty, his carriage is as straight as that of a young Indian warrior.

#### ODD HALVORSON

The subject of this sketch is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Halvor Nelson who were born in Suldal, Norway. In company with his parents, brothers and sisters, Mr. Halvorson came to the United States in 1868 and located in Waseca county. The next year Mr. Halvorson's father and Ole Thorsland, father of the late Mrs. E. P. Alstad, came out west securing homesteads in section 34, Westbank township. In the fall they walked back to Waseca county. The next spring Mr. Nelson and family came by ox team and it required twelve days to make the trip. A small log house was built that summer and a little breaking done. One of the several other inconveniences that most of the new settlers of the community had to contend with during the first few months of their residence here was the fact that there were only one stove. So when bread had to be baked the women had to take their dough and go to the home of Mrs. Ole K. Hagen, who



owned the one stove in the neighborhood. But they got along all right and nobody had to eat unbaked dough. New London was the nearest town and there is where we secured our flour and other necessities, says Mr. Halvorson.

Halvor Nelson died in 1884 and his son, Odd, became the owner of the Nelson homestead. Since that time Odd Halvorson has added more land to the original farm and has erected good modern buildings. His brother, Nils, secured a homestead in section 4 and farmed there for a number of years. Mr. Halvorson's sisters, of whom there were three, married as follows: Carrie (deceased.) Tosten Hanson, an early settler in section 4. Anna (deceased) married Andrew Pederson. Sophie (deceased) married Carl Saterbak, also deceased.

Odd Halvorson was married in 1893 to Randi Bjornjeld, a native of Romsdalen, Norway. To them were born the following children: Helga, (deceased), Halvor, a resident of Benson; Sivert, of Benson; Mrs. Amos Larson, of Westbank; Anna, Mrs. Alman Lee, of Big Bend; Clara, Mrs. Henry Hagen, of Glenwood; Alfred, Albert and Amanda at home. Mr. Halvorson's mother, Helga Nelson, died in 1894.

Mr. Halvorson has been a home builder in the true sense of the word. He has also taken an active interest in all matters pertaining to educational and religious matters. He and family are members of the Big Bend Lutheran church and highly respected in the community where they have lived and labored so long.

#### ERICK P. ALSTAD

Erick P. Alstad is a native of Norway, being born at Hevne, near Trondhjem. When he was seventeen years of age he came to America—direct to Big Bend—which has been his field of operations ever since. His first years in this country was spent working on farms, most of the time for his uncle, Gabriel Skogrand. He also worked at the carpenter trade. In 1891, in company with Grant Graham, he rented the Big Bend Roller Mills and learned the milling business. A year later he and the late John H. Skogrand purchased the mill and Mr. Alstad took full charge of the business, and for twenty years thereafter continued the manufacture of "XXXX BEST" Flour. In 1911 the mill dam was washed away causing the mill to be closed down. About that time he purchased the mercantile business from a Mr. Earsley, the business being the same that was established in 1886 by Ole H. Blom, now a resident of Idaho. Mr. Alstad has always been a very active man and has taken a keen interest in all civic matters. Politically he has affiliated with the re-

publican party and has always taken an active interest in that party's success down through the years.

Mr. Alstad was married in 1893 to Miss Carrie Thorsland, a daughter of one of the pioneers of this community. To them were born the following children: Lena Christine, Olga and Olaf Anton. Mrs. Alstad died about three years ago.

### MRS. ANNA HALVORSON

Few women have ever gone into a new country and conquered its wild state and done it so thoroughly and so successfully as has Mrs. Anna Halvorson, a pioneer in section 8. Mrs. Halvorson (Anna Braum) was born in Norway in 1850 and came with her parents to the United States in 1868, directly to Waseca county, Minnesota. Here Mrs. Halvorson's father died and soon thereafter the widowed mother removed with the children to Renville county. Here Anna was married in 1877 to Ole Halvorson and the same year they came to Big Bend and settled on the homestead that has ever since been the family's home. (Their first home was a sodhouse in which they lived for several years.) In 1890 the father fell a victim to the White Plague and the widow and children were left to shift for themselves. Mrs. Halvorson and the oldest children heroically set to work, and not only did they succeed in making a living but soon were able to build a good framehouse and later a good barn. Eighty acres of land was also added to the original homestead, and all this Mrs. Halvorson paid for. Later Mrs. Halvorson proved a homestead in North Dakota, demonstrating that a woman is capable of doing great things.

Her six children are married, most of them living in the immediate neighborhood. They are: Gena, Mrs. L. M. Larson, Hilda, who married Kittel Kittelson and died in North Dakota. Henry, living in North Dakota. Louise, Mrs. Martin Ronning, of Kragero township; Mary, Mrs. Hans Larson, and Albert who is with his mother on the home farm.

### S. S. SATERLIE, JR.

Although not of the earliest Big Bend pioneers, S. S. Saterlie, Jr., after coming here in the year 1880, at once demonstrated that he was of the mold that do things. In all matters pertaining to educational, religious and political matters he was always deeply interested and never failed to give his unbiased opinion at the opportune time. It was he and his neighbor, Lars Halvorson, that circulated the first and

solicited the funds for the building of the Big Bend Lutheran church in the middle of the eighties—and did it without pay. In school work he was just as zealous and served for a number of years as clerk of district No. 17. In politics he was somewhat of a mugwump, affiliating from time to time with the democratic, the republican and the populist parties; but he was always sincere in his convictions. He held various township offices, such as assessor, supervisor and treasurer and did his work faithfully and conscientiously, never allowing personal advantages to sway him in what he thought was his duty. Few communities can boast of a better citizen.

Mr. Saterlie came to United States from Sogn, Norway, where he was born, in the year 1868. His first home was in Rice county, Minnesota, where he was married. To Mr. and Mrs. Saterlie were born the following children: Ole, now a resident of North Dakota, Sivert, farmer in Swift county; Belle, widow of the late H. D. Blom; Lena, Mrs. N. O. Farness; Unni, Mrs. H. A. Boe, of Arnegard, N. D.; Ella, Mrs. Anton Berge, of Milan, and Henry, a farmer near Crosby, N. D.

Mr. Saterlie died in 1919, being at the time a resident of Milan, and Mrs. Saterlie died two years ago at the age of 91.

#### ARNT PEDERSON

Arnt Pederson, a pioneer of Big Bend, was born near Trondhjem, Norway, in 1845. In 1866, in company with his widowed mother he came to the United States and stayed a few years in Fillmore county. In the spring of 1870 he came to Chippewa county and located in section 32, Big Bend. His original land consisted of eighty acres, but by thrift and energy he later acquired additional land, and was, at the time of his death, the owner of more than three hundred acres.

Mr. Pederson was married to Karen Johnson, a native of Sweden. To them were born the following children: Peter A., Nels, Albert, Christine, Andrew, John and Lava.

Mr. Pederson always took an active interest in all civic matter and did much in pioneer days to help shape the church and school work in those early days. He held various township offices and always acquitted himself with credit. He was a member of the Kviteseid Lutheran church at Milan nearly from the time of its organization and was ever ready to assist in all work tending to the uplift of religious matters. A lifelong neighbor of Mr. Pederson characterizes him in these words: "Pederson was a man of few words and large deeds."

Mr. Pederson died in 1914 and his wife preceded him to the grave in 1906.



## OLE, HALVOR AND JOHN NORBY

Ole, Halvor and John Norby are the sons of H. H. Norby, who in company with Hans P. Blom and other "Telemarkings" came to Chippewa county in 1869, and are therefore entitled to a place in the ranks of the Big Bend pioneers. The Norby brothers were born in Norway but came with their parents to the United States as boys. Their parents first settled in Fillmore county, later coming to Big Bend, as stated. Their mother died a few years after coming to Big Bend and their father, H. H. Norby, remarried and moved to Polk county, in this state. The boys, however, have remained residents here and have gone through all the various stages of development that has taken place since they came. Ole and John each have splendidly developed farms in section 21, and Halvor who also owned a farm in the same section, sold several years ago and now lives a retired life at Milan. In 1888 Halvor married a young lady from Fillmore county and they raised a family of fine boys and girls. Ole and John married respectively Marie and Anna Larson, daughters of Morten Larson, another Big Bend pioneer, who lived in section 8. Mrs. Ole Norby died a few years ago leaving him with a family of grown children. Ole now lives a retired life, his son-in-law Tideman Barduson having charge of his well-equipped farm. Another daughter of Mr. Norby is married to Gilbert Molden and lives in the province of Saskatchewan, Canada.

It is men, like the Norby brothers, that have built America. As pioneers they could see great future possibilities in this section and were not afraid to "pull their coats" and go to work. Their efforts have been amply rewarded, which is also true of every other pioneer coming within the scope of this treatise.

## SOLDIER PIONEERS OF BIG BEND

Only three civil war veterans settled in Big Bend during the pioneer days. They were John O. Trytten, Ole Gunion and Sven O. Berger, or Sven Olson, father of E. S. Olson, now a resident in section 2. Mr. Trytten came to the United States in 1864 and almost immediately after coming to Illinois enlisted in the Union army, his regiment being the one-hundred and fifty-third, Illinois Volunteer Infantry. An amusing story has been told of Mr. Trytten's connection with this regiment. Here it is: The company was organized at Marango on a Saturday night and the next day subject to the usual army inspection. When the inspection officer arrived Trytten was asked if he thought he would make a good soldier. Trytten, not un-

derstanding the language and having partaken of a few drinks, believed that the officer was trying to poke fun at him, grabbed the officer by the shoulders and whirled him to the ground. The officer white with rage, shouted, "I'll have you sent up before a court martial." Interfering friends came to Trytten's rescue and explained to the officer that Trytten, who could not understand English, thought the officer was poking fun at him. Immediately the officer cooled down, grabbed Trytten by the hand and exclaimed: "You seem to be made of the right stuff, and I guess you'll be all right to send against the Rebels."

Trytten served to the end of the war, and came west in 1870. He secured a homestead in section 14 which remained his home till he died, his death occurring in March, 1899. His wife and two daughters survived him. The daughters were Mrs. Carrie Gumm and Mrs. Ole Blooflat, but all of these have since then passed away.

Ole Gunion was born in Norway and came to the United States as a young man. He served in the war of the rebellion for two years and after being discharged, at the close of the war, lived in Fillmore county for two years. In 1870 he came to Big Bend and filed on a homestead in section 35. This remained the family home until 1910 when Mr. and Mrs. Gunion sold the farm and moved to Milan. Here Mr. Gunion died in 1914, Mrs. Gunion having died a few years previously. Mr. Gunion was a very entertaining conversationist and his first few years' residence in Big Bend, especially, were the scene of large gatherings of friends and neighbors, most of whom came to listen to Mr. Gunion's interesting tales of the great war.

Sven Olson Berger, the third and only other Big Bend resident who served in the civil war, was born in Norway where he grew to manhood. During the fifties he came to the United States—to Manitowac, Wisconsin, where he spent several years as a shoemaker and a farmer. At the outbreak of the civil war he enlisted in Company A, Tenth Regiment, Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, and served for eleven months around the region of Mobile, Alabama. After the close of the war he again took up farming in Wisconsin remaining there until he and family came to Big Bend in 1872. His homestead was located in section 18 and here he spent twenty years farming and developing the land. In 1892 he moved to Milan, where his son, Edward, was engaged in business, making his home with the latter until he, in 1897, passed away. His wife died in 1886.

## NICOLAI HANSON

Nicolai Hanson came to Big Bend in the year 1872 and settled on land in section four. He and family immigrated to this county in 1870 and lived a year at Willmar before coming to Big Bend. While a young man Mr. Hanson spent several years as a fisherman on the north seas and had many interesting experiences to relate from the days while so engaged. One summer they spent near Hammerfest and while there had occasion to see the sun at midnight.

Mr. Hanson was married to Beret Samuelson in 1852. They were the parents of nine children—six boys and three girls, namely Mary (Mrs. Rasmus Johnson), Sophia (Mrs. Martin Anderson); Simon, Severin, Nils, John, Anton, Hans and Nora (Mrs. Sivert Moe.)

Nicolai Hanson was born in 1827 and died in 1906. Mrs. Hanson was born in 1830 and died in 1912. 1903 they sold their Big Bend farm and were residents of Milan at the time of their death.

## TOSTEIN HAUGESMO

Tostein Thompson Haugesmo was a native of Telemarken, Norway, where he grew to manhood and where he was married. During the early Seventies the family immigrated to the United States and came first to Dakota county. In 1880 they came to Big Bend and located in section 11, buying the improvements of Jorgen Boe on the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of that section, the same being located on railroad land. When the land was placed on the market the Thompson family bought the land, Mr. Haugesmo having died before this time—in 1888.

To Mr. and Mrs. Thompson were born the following children: Margit (Mrs. T. S. Thompson); John, a farmer in section 12; Ragnhild, who married Paul Johnson, a pioneer in section 15, and who died soon after her marriage; Eiven, Ole, Carl and Ragnhild (2) who is Mrs. Anton Jerve.

In 1890 Mrs. Thompson married John Jenson and the cultivation of the farm was continued under Mr. Jenson's supervision. Later the S  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the southeast quarter of section 2 was purchased and here Mr. and Mrs. Jenson made their home until a few years ago when Mrs. Jenson passed away. Mrs. Jenson was always a tireless worker in church affairs and was actively connected with the Central Ladies' Aid society for many years.

## JOHAN O. ODDAN

Johan O. Oddan is a native of Hevne, Trondhjems Stift, Norway, where he was born on December 10, 1857. When 23 years of age he



came to the United States—to Big Bend. His first year in this country was spent working for Sveinung Olson in Westbank. For two years he worked Paul Blom's farm after which he settled on railroad land in section 3. In 1885 he was married to Ragnhild Vik and to this union four children were born, viz: Hans Lauris, Ole, Ingeman and Sarah. In 1906 Mr. Oddan went to Elie, Manitoba, Canada, where he farmed a few years and where Mrs. Oddan died in 1908. Returning to the United States a few years later he again took up his residence on his Big Bend farm. But this was only temporary. A year later he moved out to Saskatchewan, Canada, where he secured government land and where he has since resided. Mr. Oddan, while a resident in Big Bend, took active interest in church and civic affairs and did much for the upbuilding of the community. His son, Lauris, is now living on the Oddan farm. The other children are residents of Saskatchewan.

#### T. S. THOMPSON

Mr. Thompson came to Big Bend in the early eighties. He was born in Norway and came with his parents to Wisconsin as a boy. During his first year in Big Bend he worked for Jeff Graham, assisting him in the building of the mill dam. In 1883 he was married to Margit Thompson and the same year took up his residence in section 5, which has ever since been the family home. Mr. Thompson has been a real pioneer builder and has done much to further the interests of religious and educational work in his community.

#### KNUT JOHNSON

Knut Johnson was born in Valle, Satersdalen, Norway, on April 13, 1842. At the age of seventeen he came to the United States—to Fillmore county, where he remained for a few years. In 1868 he went to Goodhue county where he, in 1870, was married to Anna Kvam. The same year he came out to Chippewa county and homesteaded the NW¼ of section 10 in Big Bend. On his first trip to where his present home is located he walked from Willmar on foot. When near where the farm buildings are now located, two antelopes, who had been taking a rest, were scared up, jumped to their feet and disappeared to the southwest. (Not a house was to be seen anywhere. Nils Hagen live in a dugout, as did Elling Jorgenson, the only settlers there at the time.) Of the early pioneers, who were Mr. Johnson's neighbors for so many years, only two or three are now living. Mr. Johnson himself is past 87 years and his stalwart frame is bent and trembling.

To Mr. and Mrs. Johnson were born the following children: James of Hatterdahl, Minn.; John, of Hammer, S. D.; Hannah, Mrs. D. Bearbower, of Davenport, Iowa; Anna, Mrs. Albert Gjerset, of Minneapolis; Ole, of Wolf Point, Mont.; Caroline, Mrs. H. Scensing, of Paynesville, Minn.; Amandus, of Benson; Levi, of Veblen, S. D.; Carolus, who works the old homestead, and Naomi, at home. Mrs. Johnson died in March, 1928.

### LARS S. SATERLIE

Lars S. Saterlie, although not of the earliest settlers in Big Bend, was as much of a pioneer as any of them. When he came here with his parents in the spring of 1880 the stretch of country comprising the east and northeast section of the township was still in its primitive stage. The Woods brothers and the Hulls had been there and turned a few acres of the virgin soil, but this had reverted to sod, not having been cultivated for several years. Lars S. and his parents, Sjur and Unni (Nelson) Saterlie, settled on some railroad land in section one and immediately began the development of the land. Not being molested and allowed to continue its cultivation, Lars later purchased the land and also bought the so-called Kingman farm. For a few years, however, Lars made his home at Montevideo, being employed by P. L. Norman and later also established himself in the mercantile business there. Here he was married to Amelia Erickson, a sister of E. P. Alstad, in 1887. In the spring of 1890 Lars and family took up their permanent residence in Big Bend and for nearly thirty years carried on extensive farming operations. He was the owner of more than a section of land, all of which was cultivated and producing fine crops.

Lars Saterlie was a democrat in politics but never took a very active part, his extensive farming allowing him little time for other interests. However, he never lost an opportunity to advocate ideas that he believed was for the best interests of the country. He was an American by choice and believed it every American's duty to foster the spirit of Americanism.

Mr. and Mrs. Saterlie were the parents of the following children, all living: Luella, Selmer, Minda, Clarence, Urban, Annabelle, Mason and Esther. Selmer is a resident of Oklahoma; the other children are living at home.

Mrs. Saterlie died in March, 1928, and Mr. Saterlie passed away less than two months ago at the age of 70. Both Mr. and Mrs. Saterlie were good citizens and good neighbors.

## JACOB STOEN

Among the pioneers of Big Bend who faced the blizzards, exposures and hardships of the Seventies were Jacob Stoen, who homesteaded in section six during the latter part of that decade. Jacob Stoen was born in Gran's Prestegjeld, Hadeland, Norway, September 5, 1834, where he grew to manhood. In 1866 he emigrated to this country, coming first to Waseca county, Minnesota. He was married to Miss Martha Braum in 1867. They moved to Renville county in 1874 where they made their home for two years. They located in Big Bend in 1876 and remained residents here until their death. Mr. Stoen died December 19, 1909, and Mrs. Stoen about two years ago. Mr. Stoen was very much interested in educational and religious matters and never tired of giving his active support to matters along this line. He was a charter member of the Big Bend Lutheran church and served the congregation as precentor (klokker) for 32 years. They were the parents of five children, two of whom died as small children. The living children are: Juel Stoen, of Becker county, Mrs. John Erickson, of Crookston, and Edward who bought and operates the old Stoen homestead.

## ANDERS HANSON EVENSKAAS

Anders Hanson Evenskaas came from Norway to Fillmore county in the spring of 1868. He was accompanied by Andrew Ness, another "Telemarking" who had been in America 20 years. The following winter, he became united in marriage to Bergit Torjusdotter Haugen. In the spring of 1870, they journeyed to Chippewa county in company with his brother-in-law, Aanon Torjusun Haugen, and the following from Skafsaa parish in Telemarken: Olav Gjermonson, Tarjei Storaaslie, Tjostov Storaaslie, Kjetil Aasen, Aanon Larson Dalen and brother Halvor Larson Dalen, Gonnar Gravhaug and Gonnar Grubbehaugen. Here he filed on land which he sold the next spring to Isaac Olson Syftestad who had just arrived from Perry, Wisconsin. This account is taken from "Telesoga," a publication issued by "Telelaget."

This publication also tells about Mr. Evenskaas, and many others, catching the Red River valley fever. They traveled through the greater portion of the valley on both sides of the river, but Evenskaas failed to find land that suited him. For \$36.00 he could have bought the farm on which Grand Forks was built. It was owned by an American who had lost his wife and wanted to move away. Anders did not fancy the level prairie. He bought no land, neither did



he life on a homestead, but returned to Chippewa county in the fall and homesteaded part of the land which is now known as the Evenskaas farm.

He was born July 24, 1844. His wife came to America in 1853 from Telemarken, Norway, at a tender age. Her folks settled first in Wisconsin.

Their children are Hans, on a farm near the family homestead, Theodore who died at Scobey, Montana, Severin on a farm north of Montevideo, Mrs. Tina Engelson, near Watson, Mrs. Anne Ness lives in North Dakota, Mrs. Maria Torgerson, near Watson, Mrs. Hilda Kolkjen at Louisburg and Mrs. Thea Falla at Montevideo.

Anders Evenskaas served Zion church as precentor (klokker) for 41 years and in all these years he was absent only three times, twice while attending a synod and the third time for some other reason. He had a fine musical ear and a good voice. With Anders leading, there were no false notes heard. He was also a good violin player and was a welcome guest at weddings and other social doings.

In 1909, Mr. and Mrs. Evenskaas moved to Watson. She died in 1922 and he in 1925. During the last few years of his life, he suffered from a weak heart. The end came as he was hurrying to catch a train for Montevideo.

#### OTHER EARLY SETTLERS

The above biographical sketch of a number of the Big Bend pioneers does not include them all. There are a number of whom the writer has been unable to secure any detailed information. He personally knew most of them, and yet knew very little about their early history—when they came to Big Bend, where they came from, etc., etc. He made a sincere effort to secure the history of EVERY ONE of the first settlers of the township but without success. However, he wishes to add that the following were some of the pioneers, that they were good farmers, good neighbors, that they did their bit—in a large way—to develop the community in which they lived and that, having finished their life-work, the memory of their valor, unselfishness and sturdy character is an heritage that the present generation will do well to foster:

G. E. Skogrand came to the United States during the early seventies and secured a homestead in section 24. He was born at Hevne, Trondhjems Stift, Norway, and here also is where his splendid wife (Sarah Oddan) first saw the light of day. Their home farm—the NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 24—is one of the best improved farms in the coun-

try. They are now making their home at Big Bend City where their daughter and only child, Mrs. John Torgerson, also lives. Mr. Skogrand has been a very active man and has done much for the uplift of the community of which he has for so long been a member . . . . . John and Charles Mickelson were pioneers in sections 28 and 21 respectively. Both have passed away . . . . . Ole O. Trytten was an early settler in section 14. He was an uncle of Ole and Lewis Hermanson . . . . . Halvor Aleckson was one of the very early settlers in section 34. His son, Gullick, now owns the original Hans P. Blom homestead in the same section and is married to a daughter of Isak Ellertson who bought the Blöm homestead in 1888. Mr. Ellertson died about eight years ago . . . . . Erick Iverson was a pioneer settler in the same section (34) . . . . . Helmer and Julius Olson (brothers) were early settlers in sections 26 and 27 respectively. Both have passed away, the former less than a year ago at the age of 91. . . . . Gulbrand Anderson homesteaded in section 29 but sold his homestead in the early nineties, later becoming a resident of Swift county. Mr. Anderson has now for many years been a resident of Milan. . . . . Anders Skreberg was an early settler in section 31. The old homestead is now owned by his son, Hans. . . . . Hans Molden homesteaded in section 30. He has been dead for many years and his son now owns the farm. Ole P. Saterbak was a pioneer settler in section 18—the present Andrews farm—but sold in 1894 and removed to the state of Tennessee where he died a few years back. . . . . A Mr. Grondahl homesteaded the NW¼ of section 18 but left the country many years ago. . . . . E. E. Stensland was a homesteader in section 6. Mr. Stensland was at one time a hardware merchant at Milan, but went to Canada where he died about a year ago. . . . . Severin Lyse homesteaded the Lauris Olson farm in section six, which Mr. Olson bought from him during the eighties. . . . . Sivert Jerve homesteaded the SE¼ in section 24. He died in 1891 and his son, Carl, is now the owner of the farm. . . . . Mathia Heim purchased, many years ago, the old Isaacson farm in section 26—the original home of the late John Isaacson, of Milan. . . . . Tosten Hanson homesteaded the S½ of the NE¼ in section 4 but later sold and moved across the line into Swift county.

If any of the pioneers have been omitted it has not been intentionally done. They all did their part nobly in settling and developing a new country.

### A DROWNING

Among the pioneers in the Big Bend country during the late sixties were Swenning Olson, his father, Ole Olson, and a brother, Aane. This brother, about twenty years of age, had cut down a big basswood from which he had made a canoe. The canoe being perfectly round, was a somewhat treacherous contrivance on the water. Young Olson, however, was an expert in any kind of a boat, and almost every day would jump into his canoe and go skinning down the river. One day, in the early spring of 1870, when the Chippewa was on a rampage, he was again on the river going down stream. He had reached a point a little to the southwest from the Mikkelson place when his canoe struck some obstruction and capsized. A big cottonwood that had been precipitated into the river by the caving in of the riverbank extended its branches out into the river; to one of these young Olson clung. Knute Johnson, who happened to be only a short distance away, saw his predicament and shouted to him to hang on while he ran up the river to get a boat. Johnson soon had the boat going down the stream, but when he reached the spot where Olson clung to the tree he had disappeared. This records the first drowning in the Chippewa river in Big Bend. Olson's body was recovered a few days later and buried near the bank of the river. The intervening years have obliterated the marks placed where he was buried and no one knows today where his grave is. Twenty-three years later—in the summer of 1893—a brother of Andrew Molden drowned just south of the old Big Bend mill dam. Outside of these accidents in the Chippewa river, the oftentimes treacherous stream has claimed no victims in the Big Bend territory.

### HISTORY OF THE BIG BEND LUTHERAN CHURCH

The pioneers of Big Bend were a God-fearing, law-abiding and peaceful people. The heritage of Christian living dates back many generations. The township was first settled by men and women who came there from across the seas—the majority of them from the valleys of Norway; and when they came to seek and build new homes on the wide American plains, the training they had had in the homes of their childhood was a part of them. No sooner had they staked their homesteads, built their log huts and moved in ere the matter of religious services in their midst were taken up and discussed. But they knew that calling a minister to serve the sparsely settled community at that time was impractical. They must have an organization, they were poor, so must bide their time.



Prior to 1870 there were no religious services held; but in that year Rev. Mr. Markhus, of Norway Lake, came four different times and preached for the settlers. On August 13, 1870, the Immanuel congregation was organized and a call extended to Rev. Markhus. On August 14, 1870, Rev. Markhus preached in the grove by the river near Knut Angrimson's home at which time nine children were baptized.

Rev. Mr. Moses and Rev. Mr. Brandt also visited the settlement and preached in various places, preferably in the community where the Immanuel congregation existed. The first ecclesiastic to ever preach a sermon in the township of Big Bend was, no doubt, Rev. Osten Hanson, who preached at the home of Nils Hagen in the spring of 1872.

In 1872, the Immanuel congregation extended a call to O. E. Solseth, a graduate of the Concordia seminary at St. Louis, Mo., and it was from that time that regular religious services were held for the growing community. It was here that the late Rev. Mr. Solseth spent the remainder of his life in the service of the Lord and the hardships he endured on long drives during the winters of those early days would have broken the physique of a less hardy man than Rev. Mr. Solseth was. During his 36 years of service in the three congregations—Immanuel, Zion and Big Bend—he baptized nearly 2,000 children, confirmed nearly 1,000, married 375 and conducted about 450 funerals.

Before 1880 most of the people of Big Bend attended services at the Immanuel church in Tunsberg, which was erected in 1876, and several of them were members of that congregation. However, as the land became settled and the population increased, the need for a "home church" became more and more pressing. Accordingly, on March 17, 1880, a meeting was held at the home of Nils K. Hagen, when the Big Bend congregation was organized. There were twenty charter members, as follows: Ole Paulson, Kristoffer Fyng, Knut Johnson, Jorgen O. Aasland, Thorsten Gunderson, S. Thorsland, Nicolai Hanson, Andrew Pederson, Nils K. Hagen, Jacob Stoen, G. Gabrielson, Ole Hagen, Knut Hagen, Lars Halvorson, Tollef Kittelson, E. E. Stensland, S. S. Saterlie, J. Haugerud, Ole Halvorson and Christian Volgerson.

Immediately after the organization of the congregation it was decided to go ahead with the building of the church edifice. \$250 were already available and more funds were being subscribed.

The matter of a location for the church was not, however, definitely decided until on September 27, 1885, when, at a meeting held, the offer of Ole K. Hagen, donating a piece of land for the church and cemetery, located in the southwest corner of the NW¼ of the NW¼ of section 2, was thankfully accepted. At the next annual meeting, held at the home of Knute K. Hagen on May 18, 1886, it was decided to go ahead with the building of the church. During that summer the foundation was laid, the work being donated by Lars Halvorson and H. O. Borgen. The next spring, 1887, the superstructure was built, the contract being let to P. O. Saterbak and brother, Carl. The church was dedicated in June 1893, the resident pastor, O. E. Solseth being assisted by six visiting clergymen.

During all these years Rev. Mr. Solseth continued to serve. But the call was too large for the now aging pastor. Besides the Big Bend congregation, Rev. Mr. Solseth also served Immanuel, Zion and a congregation in Lac qui Parle county. Solseth was always on the go, in winter as well as in the summer time. He oftentimes suffered much from exposure to the cold, biting winds in the winter, but he never complained. He loved his work and gladly and cheerfully went about ministering to the spiritual needs of his scattered congregations. Besides the congregations above mentioned, he at one time also served congregations in Swift and Yellow Medicine counties, his field of activity thus covering a radius of more than fifty miles.

In 1897, Rev. Carl Døving was called as assistant pastor, and he served until 1904, when he resigned. In April of the same year Rev. J. D. Wein was called and served until 1910. Rev. Mr. Solseth died on June 19, 1908, and after his death a call was sent to Rev. E. I. Strom, of Red Wing, who accepted. In 1911, the several congregations served by Rev. Mr. Solseth, were divided, Rev. Mr. Strom retaining the congregations of Immanuel and Zion. Theo. Bergee, a graduate of the theological seminary at Minneapolis and a candidate for the ministry, accepted this year (1911) a call from the Big Bend and Jevnager congregations, and was ordained in the Big Bend church on July 9, 1911. His resignation was accepted a few years later, since which time Rev. C. T. Jenson has been the resident pastor.

In 1920 the Big Bend church celebrated its Fortieth anniversary, and on March 17 of next year (1930) it will be fifty years since the congregation was organized—at the home of Nils Hagen. Only three out of the twenty men who took part in that memorable meet-

ing are still living, namely Ole Paulson, Tollef Kittelson and Knut Johnson. It would be a glad day for these aging pioneers to take part in the semi-centennial celebration of the church, which will no doubt be held during the fore part of next summer.

It may be of interest to the present generation to know that Nils K. Hagen was the first treasurer of the congregation. That Johannes Tvedt, Jacob Støen and Andreas Fredrickson were the first board of trustees, Ole Gjerset the first secretary and that Jacob Støen was the first precentor (klokker), he serving in that capacity for thirty-two years.

The first ladies' aid society was organized in the summer of 1885 and Mrs. Andreas Fredrickson was its first president. The second society of this character was organized on the west side in 1886 and Mrs. J. Stoen elected its first president. The "Central" Aid society was organized in 1910 with Mrs. E. P. Alstad as president. The "North" society was organized in 1911 with Mrs. E. O. Hagen president. All of these "first presidents" have gone to their reward, but the memory of their unselfish devotion to duty in the realm of religious activities will live for a long time.

#### REV. SOLSETH'S 35TH ANNIVERSARY AS PASTOR

As stated above it was in 1872 that Rev. Solseth took charge of the Immanuel congregation and it was to commemorate the 35th anniversary of this event that the members of his several congregations, in 1907, staged a festival in his honor. Owing to his long service and long residence everybody knew Solseth and everybody loved him. The day of the celebration, June 1907, was a lovely summer day and people came from far and near; it was one of the largest gatherings of people ever seen in the county. The program consisted of singing and speech-making, Rev. Bruno and Rev. Lewis Moe each delivering addresses. The last number of the program was a talk by Rev. Solset. He reminisced about the early days, when everybody were poor. He told of the hardships that everybody endured and that were unavoidable in a new country. "In the summertime," said he, "the places where we worshipped had a peculiar architecture. The roof was the blue heavens and the walls of the "building" the trees "round about us." Rev. Solset spoke in the Norwegian language, and when he finished he thanked the people for their faithfulness and for the kindness shown him during all the years he had been in their midst, there were tears in his eyes. Rev. Solset's address follows—printed in the language in which it was delivered.



## PASTOR SOLSETH'S TALE

Naar jeg ved denne leilighed træder frem for at tale til denne store forsamling, saa er det med blandede følelser og dyb indre bevægelse. De følelser som rører sig hos os idag finder vel et passende udtryk i Jakob's ord, "Herre jeg er ringere end alle de miskundheder og al den trofasthed, som du har gjort imod din tjener."

Naar tanken vender tilbage 35 aar, og lader et billede af den tid og dens forhold tegne sig af for vort blik, og saa, lader dette billede tilsettes med de forandringer, som aar efter aar er skeet ned igjennem tiden, indtil idag, stilles for os, saa finde vi en stor forskjel baade i de jordiske og i de kirkelige kaar. Istedetfor de smaa og travelige huse er der kommet bekvemmelige huse. Istedetfor den langsomme og sensnude "Buck" og "Bred" eller "Duke" og "Deim" træder den hænderigere og raskere hest. Istedetfor "lumber" vognens rist og stød, vugges vi nu i buggyens behagelige gyngen. Vort nabolag, fra at være en smal strimmel langs skog og elvedrag, har udvidet sig mil efter mil i bredde, og bragt naboer nærmere sammen. En stor forskjel paa billedet—fremgang og forbedring.

Det ærlige arbeide og sved har under Gud's skjerm og velsignelse baaret dels ringere, dels ringere fold, alt eftersom Gud vel fandt det at tjene os bedst. De velstelte farme og velhusede hjem bære vidnesbyrd for den yngre slekt om flittigt arbeide og ærligt stræv, nøisom samlen og ingen ødsel spreden. Vi gjør da en liden stans og bringer i erindring, at det er Gud, som har styret alt dette, opholdt os og givet tidligt regn og solskin, altsaa er nu hverken den som planter, ikke heller den som vander, men Gud som giver veksten. Og dette har han gjort af sin blotte faderlige godhed og miskundhed. Medens vi kan ha været utilfreds og kanke murret lidt af og til. Ydmygt bøie vi os og siger: Vi er ringere end alle den miskundhed og al den trofasthed, som du har gjort imod din tjener.

Ser vi dernæst paa os selv: For det første, vi som dengang var voxne mænd og kvinder, saa er vi meget forandret. Vi har saknet vor gang; svagheit har traadt istedet for manddommens kraft. Vi har blit graasprenget i haartotten, som man sa.

Men der er ogsaa et andet billede fra hin tid, mere vigtigt og betydningsfuldt—det kirkelige forhold, der omfatter sjælens velvære. Da I bosatte eder i disse egne, kom I ogsaa ihu: Der er en anden føde. Af Jordens opgro, vi hungret os tildøde, om vi ei det förstod. Det er den manna sød, som lindrer sjælens nød.

Om eders timelige kaar var noksaa ringe, sørget I for at faa nyde godt af kirkens goder i ord og sakrament. Det kirkelige billede i det

ydre var dengang noget underligt. Stundom havde den kirke vi brugte at samles i en eiendommelig bygningsstil. Taget var den blaa himmelhvælvning; væggene, træer i skoven. Somme tider de smaa "living" huse, hvor kjøkken, parlor og sengeværelse bestod af et rum. Somme tider brugtes skolehuset. Det var Herren ord, og ikke huset som drog sjælene did. Nu er der en stor forandring. Gode kirker, det kirkelige hjem i det ydre hyggeligt. Nu hvilken naadefuld kjærlighed har ikke Gud i disse 35 aar bevist os, idet livsens brød er brudt for os alle i disse aar. Bordet dækket med naadens sjæleføde til hjertefred og trøst, i sygdoms stunder, naar verdens trøst kun lidet kvæger, har Kristi ord bragt trøst, som læger skjælesaar.

Naar vi stilles frem for disse uforskyldte velgjerninger imod os, da maa vi nok udbryde med Jakob: "Jeg er ringere end alle de miskundheder og al den trofasthed, som du har gjort imod din tjener."

Det er vist ogsaa passende, at vi idag kommer ihu, at der savnes mange ansigter, som engang var iblandt os. Mange gamle, mange unge, ægtefælle, fader og moder, søn og datter, bror og søster. De har lagt vandringsstaven bort, og er dækket af sin gravhøi. Mangen en stille taare randt ved afskedstimen. Dette leder vor tanke paa den vigtige sandhed, at vi ere i udlændigheden, at vort borgerskab er i himmelen—at glasset rinder, tiden gaar, evigheden forestaar—at vi atter skal mødes. For de flestes vedkommende nære vi det haab, at de ikke vandret bort i den tomme og haabløse vantro, men i troen paa sin frelser, og ere nu blandt den store hvide flok. Det er jo maalet for vort kirkelige arbeide. Lad os da bede Gud velsigne for os naadens midler, at vi kan blive opholdt i ordet og troen indtil vi dør.

Nu lidt om hvad der er udført af mig i disse 35 aar. Døbt har jeg 1926. At ha været en tjener i Herrens haand til at bringe en slig skare ind i Jesu frelsehaand for at de skulde bli Guds arvinger og Kristi medarvinger er en stor velsignelse. Konfirmeret 961. Ægteviet 370. Jordfæstet 445. I omtrent tyve aar har dette kald ydet \$11,000 til kirkelige øiemed udenfor menighederne.

Hvad den indre hjertefrugt af mit arbeide i disse aar er, se det ved alene Gud. Om mit arbeide har været skrøbeligt og mangelfuldt, saa vinder dog Herrens ord sjæle for Jesus og drager syndere til Gud.

Nu, tilslut, hjertelig tak for alt godt i har vist mig i alle disse aar.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL—Rev. O. E. SOLSETH

Ole E. Solseth was born in Aal, Hallingdal, Norway, on August 30, 1844, his parents being Erick Erickson and Guri (Olson) Erickson. When Ole was a year old his parents emigrated to America and set-

tion in Wisconsin, where they lived a year. When they came to Fillmore county, Minnesota, that country was a wilderness. He homesteaded near Harmony, and it was here that the subject of this sketch grew to manhood. When he was 22 years old he entered Luther college at Decorah, Iowa, from which institution he graduated in 1869. From 1869 to 1872 he attended Concordia Seminary at St. Louis, Mo., graduating there in the latter named year. Before his graduation he had received a call from the Immanuel congregation in Tunsberg township, Chippewa county, Minnesota, which he accepted. This place became his permanent home, and Solset was satisfied. There was no wanderlust in his makeup. Before coming to Tunsberg he was married to Miss Liv Maland, a Fillmore county girl. To them were born eight children. They are Edward, Anton, Louise, Hildah, Martin, Rudolph, Alfred and Leonard, all living.

\* \* \*

At the writer's request Ed. A. Solseth supplied the following facts regarding his father's first years as a minister on the frontier:

"Services were held during the first years in the small houses of the settlers, and, in the summer time, in the grove by the river near Knut Angrimson's. In 1876 the Immanuel church was built. It took a lot of work and self-sacrifice for the few struggling settlers to do that. It was the year of the grasshopper siege and money was as scarce as 'hen's teeth.' For many years the Immanuel church was the largest house of worship in the county. Father and mother lived the first year at the home of Endre Endreson, father of Ole Einerson. They were assigned one little room, which was living room, dining room, kitchen, bed room and study room, all in one. Those first years were busy years for the young pastor. Very often he would be away from home a week at the time. One bitterly cold winter day he left Benson in the early morning, bound for home. He was driving a team hitched to a cutter. The snow was deep and continually drifting, thus obliterating all tracks that had previously been made. By noon he got as far as the Andrew Westberg home in Mandt township, where he was invited to have dinner and feed his horses. After dinner, as he was ready to start, Mr. Westberg asked: 'Where are you going to drive?' Solseth lifted his arm and pointing his finger at the Immanuel church steeple, which was discernible in the distance, said, 'straight for that steeple.' He did so and reached home late in the evening.

When the news of Rev. Solseth's death, on that June day, twenty-one years ago, spread, there was great sorrow among his parishion-



ers and the people generally. They felt instinctively that their best friend was gone. For a generation past he had been a well-known and beloved figure among them, and the news that he was gone sank with grief into their consciousness. Rev. Wein's comment was: "A truly good man is gone." His presence can ever be felt in Chippewa county, for his works still live.

A good man never dies,  
In worthy deed and prayer  
And helpful hands, and honest eyes,  
If smiles or tears be there;  
Who lived for you and me.  
Lived for the world he tries  
To help, he lives eternally.

Who lived to bravely take  
His share of toil and stress,  
And for his weaker fellows' sake  
Made every burden less;  
He may at last seem worn,  
Lie fallen, hands and eyes  
Folded, yet though we mourn and mourn  
A good man never dies.

#### THEIR FIRST BIG CROP

The most important of all the affairs of the new settlement of Big Bend during the year 1872 was the abundant harvest of that year. It was really the first big wheat year in this section, that being the first general introduction of the Scotch Fife wheat. The average yield was twenty-five bushels per acre, although many fields yielded as high as thirty to thirty-five bushel to the acre of No. 1 Hard. And what was true of wheat was true of oats and barley. It was a bumper. Although prices were low—from 55 cents to 65 cents per bushel—the settlers felt rich. From the twenty to fifty acres under cultivation on most of the farms, several hundred bushels of grain were raised, and outside the purchase of a selfraker with which the crop was harvested, no other expenses were incurred. Hired help could be had for \$2.00 per day which was the going wage during harvest and threshing.

The grain was hauled to Benson, the new town on the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba railroad (now the Great Northern) which was the nearest railroad town for a large territory of country ex-

tending westward seventy-five miles or more, and it was a common sight during the fall of the year to see ten, fifteen and even more loads of grain winding their way over the snake-like trails towards the village of Benson; and when the tired and weary wheat-haulers arrived they would have to take the foot of the long string of loads that were awaiting their turn to unload. Sometimes a wheat-hauler from a distance would have to wait until next day before getting his load dumped in the warehouse. Hauling grain from thirty to a hundred miles, over trails that wound around hills and sloughs and fording streams with a yoke of oxen and waiting for many hours before getting a chance to unload and finally selling the wheat for 55 cents per bushel, did not seem to be a profitable operation. Perhaps, some of our present-day farmers can figure out the profit of raising wheat and spending a week on the road in marketing each load of thirty-five bushels. Perhaps, too, some of the young wives of today can appreciate the situation of a young married woman living on the prairie alone, for a week at a time, and being compelled to look after the farm chores, while roving Indians might call at any time of the day or night. How little do those who have never experienced the labors and vicissitudes of pioneer life know of real hardship.

But the large crops of that year had bolstered up the courage of the young farmers and their wives who made up the pioneer settlement. Instead of the dugouts or log houses they lived in and the oftentimes rather meager bill of fare they had to subsist on, good crops meant more money and increasing prosperity.

#### THE FIRST PUBLIC SCHOOL

The first school district to be organized in Big Bend township was district No. 17. The first school house was built in the northeast corner of section number two. Presumably, although no records are available, the Woods brothers, Marvin Hull, Ove Eveson and Hans Golden were the chief spokesmen behind the movement to secure educational advantages for their children. The minutes of the first school meeting have been lost. A small school building 14x24 was built that year—1872—and the first teacher's name was Miss Laura S. Ranney. The succeeding year's school was held three or four months every year, but as no records were kept it is impossible to ascertain who the teachers were. During the school year 1878-79 Miss Marietta Graham, daughter of Jeff Graham, the miller, was the teacher. As this was the writer's first term of school, he will state from memory that the following were some of the pupils: E. O. Hagen, Grant and Sherman Graham, Gregger and Sveinung

Boe, Aleck Johnson, John Golden, Anna and Joe Jorgenson, and Sophia Halvorson. Joseph D. Baker was the first superintendent of schools, but there is no record of his ever visiting the school. During the school year of 1879-80 Miss Ella Olson was the teacher. As it had been decided to move the school house from section 11 to section 10, school was held at that year in the old Kingman building located in section 2 where the Big Bend City is now located. In 1882-3 the new school building in section 10 was occupied for the first time and J. P. Engesether was employed as teacher. After a visit to the school, made on January 12, 1882, O. J. Rollevson, who had been elected superintendent of schools at the previous fall election, made the following report: "J. P. Engesether, teacher; enrollment, twenty-five; scholars not far advanced, but doing quite well. The teacher is well liked by the patrons of the school; he is doing quite well in the school room."

District No. 11 was organized in 1873, but no records are available as to who the first teachers were. The school house was built in 1875—a frame house 16x20 and 8 feet high. On January 12, 1882, Superintendent Rollevson made the following report: "Tilla K. Thompson, teacher; enrollment, thirty-nine; scholars a little embarrassed, but doing quite well; a young aspiring teacher but no advanced scholars."

Districts numbers 52 and 35 were formed out of that portion of Big Bend lying west of the Chippewa river, district No. 35 being in the northwestern part of the township and district No. 52 in the southwestern part. About 1902, district No. 2 was organized, territory for same being taken out of districts numbers 35 and 52.

Nearly all of the original school houses, built during the formative stage of the township's development, have been replaced by modern structures. The methods of instruction in those early days when text books were scarce, teachers less competent and requirements small cannot be compared to the efficient school system of today. But the fact that schools were established almost as soon as the new settlers could get the required number of names on a petition indicate very conclusively that the men and women who settled the wild west were anxious to have their children educated. They knew that the generations to come would be required to take their place in a nation where ignorance and illiteracy have no place.

\* \* \*

The young good-looking, well-learned, aggressive and progressive teacher, J. P. Engesether, brought new rules and new ideas into



the school. Mr. Hingesether was raised in the older sections of Wisconsin, had attended Albion Academy and had taught several terms of school in his home state before coming west. When he took charge of the school in district No. 17 in 1881 he immediately set to work to systematize the work and to put the pupils where they could do the best work. He succeeded admirably and it was from that date that interest in educational matters began. Besides the curriculum of the school room, he also instituted spelling schools and spelling contests. The writer, who was a member of the school, will quote from memory the interesting proceedings of one of these spelling schools. The scene: Teacher walking up and down the floor, with spelling book in hand; contestants arranged in rows on both sides of room; spelling starts. H. D. Blom couldn't get along with "jockeys," "Noxious" was altogether too noxious for Sherman Graham. E. O. Hagen was poor at "seizing." Ole Saterlie spelled chimney with "ies" for the last syllable. K. N. Hagen went down on a "mattress." Knut Gjerset was taken from the field by "hurricane." Sivert Hagen was no good on "rummage," and the word "albatross" was the wrong bird for Carl Fredrickson.

My memory may be at fault on some of the words given above, but the writer is trying to illustrate what an interesting event a spelling school of the eighties really was.

#### THE FIRST POSTOFFICE.

The first postoffice in the township was established in 1872 with Joel Woods as postmaster, and it may interest the present generation to know that its name was Unadilla. The writer, who was born and raised in the township had no knowledge of the township's first postoffice until he dug up the "archives," tucked away in the recesses of Ole Paulson's memory. Mail was delivered once a week by George Crane who carried the mail from Benson to Chippewa City via Unadilla. It is hardly necessary to state that mail was not delivered with such precision as it is today from our rural delivery routes. In the winter, when snows were knee deep over the prairies and the cold was intense, several weeks would sometimes pass by without the receipt of mail at Unadilla. Mrs. Paulson (Anna Golden) told the writer that when a girl of four or five years old, she was sent one day in the early spring to get the mail. Postmaster Woods happened to be away from home that day, and mail carrier Crane delivered the mail to the eagerly awaiting patrons, who were lined up outside the little postoffice building. The letters from friends and relatives "back home" were several weeks old, but they contained

"the latest news" just the same. Very few newspapers were received, and those that came were weeklies and nearly two months old.

### HAGAN POSTOFFICE

With the departure of the Woods', the Unadilla postoffice was moved over into Mandt township where it appears to have "died" for want of nourishment. In the spring of 1873 a new postoffice was established in Big Bend with Nils K. Hagen as postmaster and the postoffice was named in honor of him. Later, through a mistake in the Post Office Department at Washington, the "e" was replaced by an "a," making the name "Hagan." Mr. Hagen remained as postmaster for several years, Ole Paulson being his successor. About the year 1883 the postoffice was moved to the present inland town of Hagan and miller Jeff Graham received a commission as postmaster. In the early spring of 1887 Ole H. Blom, who had established himself in the mercantile business at Hagan, became the new postmaster. During his incumbency, or in the early spring of 1888, mail delivery to Hagan was increased from one to three times a week. In 1894, during President Cleveland's administration, J. H. Johnson supplanted Mr. Blom as postmaster and held the office two years, or until the spring of 1896 when Mr. Blom again became postmaster and continued as such until November 1902 when he sold his mercantile establishment and removed with his family to Fairfield, Washington. E. P. Alstad, having bought Mr. Blom's business, was appointed postmaster and held the office until 1904 when Albert Gjerset succeeded him. In May 1905, J. K. Johnson became postmaster and continued as such until August 1908 when rural free delivery forced its discontinuance.

\* \* \*

Apropos, the old Hagan postoffice. After having been "kicked about" for several years, it finally found permanent quarters in the Blom store—the store building erected by Ole Paulson down on the Cottonwood creek, later purchased by Stensland & Fyre and moved to the inland town of Hagan about the years 1883. The old Blom store, where the mail came three times a week (later every day) and was distributed, was a very much frequented place by the people of the countryside. Here they gathered, discussed local matters, bought their groceries, smoking and chewing tobaccos, received their mail and discussed its contents before leaving for home. Postmaster Blom and Chostov Knutson were both subscribers to the Daily Pioneer Press, the subscription price of which was \$12.00 a year and

received three copies every mail day. The patrons of the old Hagan postoffice have many pleasant memories of the gay winter evenings when the little store was jammed with people, all waiting for the mail carrier when news from the great outside world came in.

The postoffice stood in the back of the store,  
Behind the old stove stood the crude cuspidor.  
The old stove was burned to a dull dingy brown  
And the cuspidor welcomed the men of the town.  
When mail time arrived the whole town was there—  
The matron, the farmer and the maiden so fair.  
Then back in the office distinctly we'd hear  
Them sorting the mail, full of bubble and cheer;  
And when the old window went up with a whang  
We crowded around in a sociable jam,  
All eager to hear from the folks that we knew,  
Or hoping, perhaps, for a check overdue.  
A place for a smile, but no place for a frown—  
The old postoffice in Blom's little town.

#### THE GRASSHOPPER PLAGUE.

Verily the people of western Minnesota, in 1874-5-6, probably for the first time, realized the magnificent description given by the prophet Joel of the grasshopper invasions of his day when he said "The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness. Yea, and nothing shall escape them. Before their face the people shall be much pained; all faces shall gather blackness. \* \* \* They shall march, every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks. Neither shall one trust another.\* \* \* They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall; they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief."

From the most reliable information obtainable, they first made their appearance in Chippewa county in 1876. Vast swarms of the insects appeared suddenly in Northwestern Iowa and southeastern Minnesota in the year 1874. They came with west winds by the millions. They settled upon all kinds of crops, and destroyed whole fields in a day. The people were taken entirely by surprise. They knew not what to do; in fact they were utterly powerless before this vast insect army invasion. Gardens were destroyed and whole farms devastated. While they did not destroy all the crops the first year (1876), they deposited their eggs by the millions and disappeared. The insects that year sowed the land full of eggs. Many



people fondly hoped that the frosts of winter had destroyed the eggs and that no more would be seen of them. How vain were these hopes. As soon as warm weather came the next spring the little pests began to hatch and come out of the ground. They were about the size of fleas but had the appetite of full-grown hog, and they forthwith commenced their work of devastation. They were ceaseless workers. Neither frosts, nor heat nor wet weather, nor storms, nor tempests, seriously affected them. They ate almost everything in sight where they hatched out in '76. Gardens were totally destroyed, vast fields of growing grain were eaten to the roots—not a vestige left.

But this year saw the end of the grasshopper invasion. The troublesome creatures disappeared as suddenly and mysteriously as they came. The exodus occurred around the 20th of July, 1877. The day was oppressively warm, the thermometer indicating around 100 degrees in the shade with very little of wind. About ten o'clock it was discovered that the air overhead was filled with flying grasshoppers. They were in swarms of millions, flying high and going rapidly southeast. For more than an hour they swarmed past, while other millions rose from the ground and joined the flying hosts. Whither they went remains a mystery, but their departure was a great and lasting relief for which all men were devoutly thankful.

#### VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE PERIOD FROM 1874 TO 1882.

Prior to 1874 Chippewa county kept no records of births and deaths, but after that year some sort of a system was devised and a fairly complete record was kept. Through the courtesy of E. H. Nelson, present clerk of court, the writer is in possession of the births and deaths for the township of Big Bend for the period between 1874 and 1882. From this list is given the names of some of the "boys" and "girls" who have grown to manhood and womanhood and who are now some of the prominent citizens of the township. Births: October 13, 1874, Sonneva Laurina, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ole E. Einerson. Since 1891 this "baby girl" has been the wife of J. O. Kallstrom. August 23, 1874, Albert, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ole Gjerset, now a resident of Minneapolis. March 21, 1875, Edward, son of Mr. and Mrs. N. K. Hagen. Edward Hagen has continued to live in his native town and has for many years been one of the foremost citizens in his part of the state. He continues the cultivation of the old Hagen homestead, is president of the First State Bank of Big Bend City and an independent in politics. December 29, 1875, Johanne, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Knut Johnson, now the

son of D. Bearbower and a resident of Davenport, Iowa. Anna Helena, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Nils Halvorson, now Mrs. Carl Peterson and a resident of Minneapolis. September 20, 1876, Martha Berthea, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ole H. Blom. July 6, 1876, Ole, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Hermanson, now a resident of Minneapolis. May 10, 1876, Edward, son of Mr. and Mrs. Gunder Blom. Edward was killed by being kicked by a horse as he and his grandfather H. P. Blom, were returning home from church a Sunday afternoon in the fall of 1875. September 2, 1877, Ole, son of Mr. and Mrs. Knut Augrimson, for many years a prominent farmer in section 20. November 6, 1877, Edward, son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul H. Blom, now a prominent farmer in section 22. January 20, 1878, Lewis, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Hermanson, now a prominent farmer in section 14. January 29, 1878, Emma Christine, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ole Hinerson, now the wife of Christian Jorgenson, residents in section 15. August 4, 1878, Harold, son of Mr. and Mrs. Halvor Larson, now a farmer near Watson. June 4, 1878, Aug, son of Mr. and Mrs. M. Mikkelson. On August 10, 1878, this little boy met a horrible and painful death by falling into a boiler full of hot water and scalded to death. March 4, 1880, Carl Henry, son of Mr. and Mrs. Nils Halvorson. Carl, during the last ten years of his life, was a successful and prominent merchant of Big Bend City. His widow, who was Emelia Paulson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ole Paulson before her marriage, still continues the mercantile business. March 7, 1880, Helga, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Pederson, now Mrs. Carl Quam, residing in Rosewood township. April 9, 1880, Petra Amalia, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Blom, now living in Divide county, North Dakota. April 12, 1880, Edward, son of Mr. and Mrs. Tosten Hanson, now a contractor in Minneapolis. April 27, 1881, Theodore, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Torgelson, now a farmer in Swift county. August 19, 1881, Siver, son of Mr. and Mrs. Anders Nordtomme. July 3, 1882, Anton, son of Mr. and Mrs. Knut Augrimson, now a farmer in section 34. October 14, 1882, Iver, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kanten, now a prominent farmer and clerk of Big Bend township. July 16, 1882, Henry Sylvester, son of Mr. and Mrs. S. S. Saterlie, now a farmer near Scobey, North Dakota.

Among the deaths of the same period—1874 to 1882—the following are noted: April 18, 1877, John Svenningson, age 37 years. March 31, 1878, John Hermanson (father of Ole and Lewis Hermanson) age 28 years. August 10, 1881, Anne Ausvalden, age 35 years. August 7, 1881, Lars Christofferson, age 85 years. October

20, 1882, Dorthea, wife of H. P. Blom, age 71 years. June 29, 1882, Knut, son of Knute and Ingeborg Hagen, age 10 years.

### THE ODD NUMBERED SECTIONS.

The national congress in 1866 set aside every odd numbered section in the township of Big Bend and certain other townships in the county to aid in the construction of a railroad from Hastings and westward through the state. An act of the legislature, passed on March 7, 1867, accepted the donation made by the national government and granted the land so made to the Hastings and Dakota Railroad company. From time to time the time limit for building the railroad was extended by the legislature the final act being passed in 1878, when additional time of four years were given, and if, before the expiration of this time a railroad had been built, the grants made by congress should be in force and the land belong to the company. As the railroad was built in 1879 the stipulations made were complied with and the land grants turned over to the company.

However, owing to the long delay by the company in building the railroad, most of this land had been squatted on by people coming into the country seeking homes. As they were not molested, they continued to improve and farm the land, many thus gaining title by "adverse possession." Others settled with and secured deeds from the company. Much of this "disputed land" was for many years a bone of contention between the settlers, sometimes neighbor claiming "rights" to certain pieces of land that neither of them actually did have.

### OUTSTANDING SONS OF PIONEERS

While the majority of the sons and daughters of the pioneers have been content with the education our common schools afforded and have followed in the footsteps of their fathers by tilling the soil, a few of these have continued their education in higher institutions of learning and have become noted men and women. Thus, Knut Gjerset, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ole Gjerset, pioneers in section eight, pursued his education, first at the Willmar Seminary and next at the University of Minnesota graduating from both institutions. After that he spent two years at one of the leading universities of Germany. Since completing his education he has held professorships at Glenwood, Fergus Falls, and now for many years at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa. Dr. Gjerset has also written several books, the majority of them along historical lines. His history of Norway (English) in two volumes are considered by historians the most exhaus-

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tive ever written. His history of Iceland has been given the same stamp of approval. His latest venture in the literary field is a history of the Norsemen as sailors on our inland seas. He is also curator for the now very extensive Norwegian museum located at Decorah.

S. N. Hagen, second son of Mr. and Mrs. Nils Hagen, pioneers in section four, is a graduate of the Willmar seminary and Luther college. After graduating from these institutions he took up post graduate work at Baltimore, Md. During the past twenty years or more he has been connected with some of the leading universities of the East, holding a professorship in the instruction of English. At one time he was on the editorial staff of the Century dictionary. Mr. Hagen is a true type of what a young man with energy and perseverance can accomplish under primitive conditions.

Oluf Gjerset, an elder brother of the above named Knut Gjerset, has for a great number of years been one of the leading lawyers of this part of the state. He graduated from the law course at the University of Minnesota in 1891 and immediately began the practice of law at Montevideo. He served four years as county attorney of Chippewa county, mayor of the city and president of the board of education; he also served his legislative district (Chippewa and Lac qui Parle counties) as state senator for eight years, and in every position of public trust that he has held has demonstrated his keenness of perceptions and sagacious conclusions. He is also interested in farming being the owner of several valuable farms, most of them located in Swift county.

Miss Julia Saterlie, daughter of the late S. S. Saterlie, Sr., is a member of the "daughters of pioneers" who has gone farther than anyone else in the township in the matter of educational attainments. Miss Saterlie is a graduate of Windom College, at Montevideo, and the state university. After completing her education she has pursued the teaching profession and has now taught in the high schools of this and other states for a number of years. Wherever she has thus been employed school boards have been anxious to retain her services.

### THEIR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

While practically the entire pioneer population of Big Bend was born in foreign lands, they had not been citizens of the American republic very many years ere they began to elicit a growing interest in the political exigencies of their locality, the state and the nation. Something like 95% of the first citizens of Big Bend were born.

either in Norway or Sweden—they were Scandinavians. Most of these had had some schooling in their native country and knew something of the political and general history of the various countries of the world. They knew that the happiness and contentment of a people are attained only where stable and efficient government exists. Knowing this, and having faith in a popular government they began almost at once to exert their influence in township and county political affairs. This first township officials, which are given in another place of this work, indicate that the newcomers were anxious to begin the work of construction, not only in the agricultural field, but also along educational, political and religious lines.

While the majority of them were content to remain home workers and home builders, they oftentimes went as delegates to county and district political gatherings and soon became a factor to be reckoned with. It remained, however, for their sons—the second generation—to become the real politicians. Many of these have exerted considerable influence, have been elected to responsible and honorable political positions, and have, in most instances, acquitted themselves with credit. From among this list may be mentioned:

#### AUSTIN F. TEIGEN.

Austin F. Teigen, although no longer a resident of Big Bend, exerted more than ordinary influence along political lines while a resident of the township. Mr. Teigen and family became residents of Big Bend in the year 1890 when they purchased the old Marvin Hull homestead in section 12. In the fall of 1896 he was elected register of deeds and served for four years. At the fall election of 1912 he was elected to represent Chippewa county in the state legislature and served for three consecutive terms. Being a ready speaker, and a man of action he wielded considerable influence on pending legislation and sponsored several bills that were enacted into laws.

Mr. Teigen came as a boy with his parents from Gulbrandsdalen, Norway, the family settling on a homestead in the township of Tunsberg, a few miles northwest of the present village of Watson. Here he spent his boyhood days, and, being a studious chap, made good use of the then meager educational advantages. Later he spent several years at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and for several years thereafter taught school. Upon his marriage to Miss Inga Amundson, a sister of the late A. I. Amundson, who for nearly a quarter of a century served as sheriff of Chippewa county, Mr. Teigen took up his residence in Big Bend. About the year 1919 he sold his farm and removed with his family to Moorhead. Last

year he traded his Moorhead property for a farm near Perley, Minnesota, where the family now lives.

Mr. Teigen is a man of much more than ordinary ability. He has always been a reader, a thinker and close reasoner. He is not only honest in his business dealings, but he is honest in politics. He believes in the doctrine of equal rights and privileges for all men—not only as a theory but as a principle that should be maintained at all hazards and at all times. He was a good neighbor and a citizen of whose record, private and official, Chippewa county may well feel proud. Chippewa county lost a booster when Mr. Teigen moved away.

#### NELS A. PEDERSON

Nels A. Pederson, farmer, banker and legislator, is a native son of the township. He and his brothers carry on the well-improved farm of their father, the late Arnt Pederson, and do it so well that in spite of the recent serious agricultural slump, they still make it pay. When the People's State Bank at Milan was organized he became president of the institution and has continued in that capacity ever since. Some years ago he was elected to represent Chippewa and Lac qui Parle counties in the state senate and served for four years. At the 1928 election he allowed his friends the use of his name for further legislative honors, and again he "made the grade." It is men like Teigen and Pederson that carry on the laudable accomplishments of a strong, sturdy race and as time goes on many more will follow in their footsteps.

#### BIG BEND MEN IN OTHER OFFICIAL POSITIONS.

Since the organizations of Chippewa county, or rather since the first board of county commissioners met and organized, the following Big Bend men have served the second commissioner district as commissioners: Hans L. Tvedt from 1891 to 1894; H. D. Blom from 1903 to 1904; John Torgerson from 1904 to 1907.

Ole O. Lien, who was a resident of Big Bend during the seventies and ran the school in at least two of its districts, represented Chippewa county in the state legislature in 1878. The late S. O. Lien, who was a pioneer in section 17, was a brother of Ole O. Lien.

#### BIG BEND CITY

During the year 1914 there was considerable excitement throughout Big Bend, Mandt and other townships to the occasioned by the activities of a Mr. Luce, who had men covering the territory soliciting funds among the farmers for the building of an electric



railway between the city of Minneapolis and a point to the north west of Big Bend. It had long been a fond dream of the people of this territory that the long and expensive haul to market would some day be shortened by the building of a railway through the country. Inasmuch as a start on the railroad had already been made and the company had splendid terminal facilities in Minneapolis, the people of Big Bend were almost eager to subscribe money for the venture, and those who did not have the ready cash gave their notes. In anticipation of the coming railroad, A. D. Schendel, a banker of Holloway, bought 40 acres of land in section two from Lars S. Saterlie and laid out a townsite. Lots in the new Minnesota metropolis were readily sold and business houses established. The first merchant in the new town was A. Anderson, of Milan, who established a dry goods and grocery store. Oscar Johnson built and established a hardware store, Ed. Gunderson a meat market and grocery store combined, John M. Torgerson a restaurant, etc., etc. A bank was also established, the incorporators being John Torgerson, John H. Skogrand, Gabriel Skogrand and a few others. The bank commenced business with a capital of \$10,000 and a surplus of \$2,000. J. H. Skogrand was elected president and John Torgerson cashier.

Although the railroad has failed to put in its appearance the town has grown and is now a thriving country hamlet. Besides a number of business houses located there, there are also a number of good dwelling houses and a bunch of live, active boosters. The Luce Line (which has since been sold and is now under another name) is built to within 40 miles of Big Bend and may eventually have trains running into it—and through it.

#### THE BIG BEND ROLLER MILLS

Once it was the pride of Big Bend—the only business institution within a radius of many, many miles. But it has ceased to function; its wheels are rusty and the mill dam is gone. A sorrowful feeling comes over the people of the community as they recall the time when the mill was the only manufacturing institution in the Big Bend country—when each and every morning, after a good night's rest, they would awake to hear the whirr-whirr of the tireless water wheel. In the days of Alstad & Skogrand steam power was added so that the mill could continue to run when the river froze solid and shut off water power; and every morning and evening the whistle would blow promptly at six, giving the neighborhood the exact time and a cheery reminder that the old mill was on duty turning out XXXX BEST PATENT flour for the neighborhood.

As the writer sits at his desk and ponders over these things, he sees in his mind's eye the farmers with load after load of bright, clean wheat wending their way to the Big Bend mill, where in the course of a few hours the wheat would be converted into flour, reloaded on their wagons and the owners happily retrace their way back to the several homes where "mother" was waiting for XXXX BEST with which to set the bread or make pancakes for the hungry family.

The mill was built in 1880 by Jeff Graham who came here from Wisconsin. Mr. Graham was a life-long miller and knew the milling business from A to Z. He was assisted by his two sons, Grant and Herman, (named in honor of the two great civil war generals of the same names.) In 1890 Mr. Graham sold the mill to E. P. Alstad and J. H. Skogrand and removed with his family to the state of California to spend his declining years. Mr. Alstad who was under the tutelage of Grant Graham, became an expert miller and continued to operate the mill for more than twenty years. In 1911 the old mill dam gave away and it being too expensive to operate wholly by steam, further operation of the mill was abandoned. Like nearly all the smaller mills, it has been forced out of business by the larger mills of the big cities; and, too, wheat is not grown around here much any more. Farmers are raising corn and feeding it to the hogs and cattle, and increasing dairy herds consume most of the grain raised.

#### OLD-TIME FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATIONS

Who doesn't remember the old-time Fourth of July celebrations, held in the timber north of the old Big Bend mill. Those of mature years have very vivid recollections of them.

If one were to search the country over it would be difficult to find a more delightful spot in which to celebrate the nation's natal day than in the nook of the river, just north of where the Big Bend mill stands. The lofty elm trees provide splendid protection from the scorching rays of a hot July sun and the rustic scenery in amongst the fringe of trees skirting the river is such as to lure the people of the prairies, and, without exception, a Fourth of July celebration held in this favored spot never fails to draw out a large crowd of people.

At the break of morn at those early Fourth of July celebrations, the nearby populace would be awakened by what sounded like the distant roar of cannon. The noise would be produced by placing a blacksmith anvil on top of some heavy block of iron containing a hole in it. This hole will be filled with gunpowder, the anvil placed on top and a fireman holding a heated rod of iron would set off the

charge. The "bombarding" was the signal to the country folk that the celebration was on.

The early morning "cannonading" continued well into the forenoon after which there was a lull of a couple of hours. By ten o'clock wagonload after wagonload of festive adorned country folk began assembling near the scene of the celebration where already the stars and stripes, perched on an improvised flagpole was floating in the breeze. "Father" helped "mother" out of the wagon. Mother looked real "becoming," dressed as she was in her finest gingham dress. "John" and "Henry" gamboled off to the refreshment stand, where, besides lemonade, candy, gum and crackerjacks, pop and other soft drinks, fire crackers were on sale. Pretty soon exploding firecrackers could be heard all over the grounds. The boys were "having the time of their lives."

In those early day celebrations it was customary for mother to take along a lunch for the family. The extravagance of buying dinner for the entire family was out of the question. And so, here and there, family groups could be seen getting their noon-day lunch.

About one o'clock in the afternoon the exercises for the day began. The president would mount a platform, welcome the people and make a few remarks. The speaker of the day would then be introduced. At one of these celebrations the speaker was a young lawyer from Appleton. He was an eloquent speaker and swayed the audience with emotion. Later this Fourth of July speaker became a prominent politician, was elected to the legislature and served two terms as attorney general. His name was E. T. Young.

The big events of the afternoon was a ball game between picked nines, foot races, three-legged races, egg race, etc., etc. A regrettable feature of these celebrations was the large amount of intoxicating liquor consumed. This would often lead to "trouble" and fistic encounters were not uncommon.

The "Fourth of July dance" was held in the warehouse adjoining the mill. There was no dearth of fiddlers; a fiddler could be found in almost every farm home. The dancing would start after sunset or just as soon thereafter as the music arrived.

At one of these dances an organ had been secured to play second. An elderly lady, born and reared in a neighboring state, had been secured to play the organ. At the time for starting she came into the hall, shook hands with the fiddler and took her place at the organ. She wore a huge bustle—one of the most cherished pieces of female attire in those days. It stuck out so far when she sat down on the



stool that belonged to the organ that she looked sway-backed. It was hinted that she had been a music teacher in her younger days, before coming to Minnesota, and she knew music thoroughly. She pulled out a few stops on the organ, socked her foot firmly onto the pedals, struck the keys viciously with her long, bony fingers and began to sway back and forth while she fairly made the old organ dance on its feet with melodious vibrations.

It "pepped up" everybody and young Sherman Graham, who was a good clog-dancer, jumped onto the floor and put on a clog dance that fairly shook the floor. The rapi-tap-tap of his high-heeled boots on the floor was entrancing to listen to, as well as watch. The bystanders cheered vociferously as he finished.

"Let's tune up" said the fiddler to the organist. She sounded the "A" key on the organ while he twisted a peg on his violin and brought his "A" string into harmony with hers. Then he tuned his three other strings by ear to the "A," and everything was ready for the start.

Sherman Graham, who was the caller-off, would shout, "Partners all for a quadrille." Only one set of fours could dance at a time. Four young fellows—each with a girl on his arm—promptly jumped to the floor. The caller snapped his fingers and the music started. Like a flash he started the call and the dance was on in earnest:

"Salute your partners,  
Swing on the corners,  
Swing your partners,  
First couple up to the right  
and four-hands half."

and so around until the set had been completed.

—"Seat your partners."

While this was going on the men and boys were outside getting ready for the fireworks. This ended the celebration for a large part of the celebrants. The dancers "didn't go home till morning."

#### THE BIG BEND CO-OPERATIVE CREAMERY

Ole H. Blom, always alert, progressive and a leader in all civic undertakings during his more than 15 years of residence in Big Bend, started, during the early winter of 1897 the agitation for the building of a cooperative creamery at Hagan. Mr. Blom, who purchased ton after ton of home made butter during his career as a merchant there, could easily figure out where the farmers of the Hagan community practically gave away their butterfat through the slipshod manner in which it was handled. But a creamery in those days was an un-

tried experiment, and the farmers were wary of investing money in an undertaking of which they knew nothing. Mr. Blom secured facts and figures from prosperous creameries operating in the state of Wisconsin, and, at the next meeting, held during the early part of March, he presented to the large gathering of farmers undisputable figures that a creamery, if properly conducted, was a paying proposition. So, before the meeting adjourned, an organization was perfected, officers elected and laws and by-laws drawn up. The creamery was at once erected on lots just south of the Big Bend mill and Marcus Nissen, an experienced buttermaker from Sweden, engaged as operator. As the whole milk was delivered to the creamery, two large separators were installed and the skimming done at the creamery. While the writer has not been able to secure any figures as to the amount of business done, many of the farmers living in the community will remember that the Big Bend Creamery was a very busy place for many years. Little by little, however, the dairy farmers began to purchase their own separators, thus skimming the milk at home and selling the cream to the independent buyers. For lack of patronage the plant was finally closed and later torn down—a step in the wrong direction.

### SOME MEMORABLE SNOWSTORMS

Since the settlement of this part of the country there has been a number of very severe snowstorms—blizzards, as they are commonly called. The first storm of this character that the pioneers were wont to talk about occurred in January 1873. January 7 opened warm and pleasant. Along in the afternoon the wind blew up from the northwest and before dark a blinding snowstorm raged over the entire northwest. The thermometer sank steadily until it registered 30 below zero. A great many people perished and a number were badly frozen. Livestock perished by the thousands.

Three farmers, living in Lac qui Parle, were on their way to Benson with loads of wheat. They left home early in the morning, never suspecting that grim death lured in their path. They had crossed the Chippewa river and had gotten to a point a few rods west of the stable of Mikkil Mikkelson when the horses stopped and refused to go any farther. The men unhitched the horses, took off the harness and let the horses shift for themselves. Then they unloaded one of the loads, took off the box, tipped it upside down and piled grain sacks around it and crawled inside. When they were found, two days later, two of the men were dead and the third so badly frozen

that he was a cripple for life. No one now seems to remember the men's names.

The second severe snowstorm, and the worst October storm known to white man, took place on October 15, 1880. A fine mist of rain began falling about noon and about two in the afternoon the wind shifted to the northwest and in a short time one of the worst storms known to history was on. Everybody was caught unprepared. Just how many people perished in the storm is not known, but when the storm abated reports of people frozen to death began coming in. Thousands of cattle out on the ranches perished. Within a week much of the snow had melted away and the weather remained mild until the 8th of November when winter set in in earnest. The balance of the winter of 1880-81 was cold and stormy and it was late April before all the snow had disappeared.

\* \* \*

There seems to have been no very severe blizzards in this region between the years of 1880 and 1888, but in that year, on January 12 and 13, a terrible wind and snowstorm swept the country from Manitoba to Texas leaving a heavy toll of dead and frosted human beings in its wake. Nearly two hundred persons were reported frozen to death in the Dakotas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Kansas and Texas. In this locality it was not nearly as bad as the great storm of 1880, though it was bad enough. The harrowing details of death and suffering would fill a small volume. When the wind finally went down towards evening of the 15th of January, the entire Northwest resembled what we imagine the region around the North Pole must be like—an endless expanse of snow, frost and intense frigidity.

The day after the storm, as was their wont, the neighbors gathered at the Hagan postoffice to get their mail. The little country store—Blom's store—was pretty well filled with men all dressed in heavy overcoats, fur coats, fur caps, fur mittens and with felt boots on their feet. The mail was being distributed and everybody was talking about the great storm—when in steps S. S. Saterlie. He walks over to the stove, pulls off his mittens and heavy fur cap and holding his head close to the stove in an endeavor to thaw out the long icicles hanging from his whiskers, lifts his head and exclaims: "My goodness, but this was an awful storm, wasn't it boys? Only once have I seen anything to equal it and that was the October 1880 storm. I remember we were threshing when that storm came up. We unhitched the teams from the power and started for home. The threshers who were neighbors got home all right, but one of them—



I forget who—came near getting lost. He passed his farm twice but finally got home. When the boys and I (Ole and Sivert) got home our cattle were nowhere to be seen. We finally found them in the ravine north of the stables and got them in; there they remained for two days and two nights before we dared venture out to feed them. Several days later, when I visited the setting where we had been threshing, only the top of the separator was visible—machine, stacks and every thing else covered with a mountain of snow. My advice is, when you see a blizzard coming get under cover."

### THE OLD TIMER

We looked up from our work as the door opened to admit the OLD TIMER, and gave him greeting. He was not an infrequent visitor and we knew it was but a few moments until some chance opportunity would throw him into a reverie of the past, until he would relive in memory scenes and incidents and friends—some of them from a generation twice removed from our own.

Only a very few of the old timers remain, and those that are still living are stooped with the weight of years, and when we meet one of them we cannot but wonder at things he has seen and experienced in all those years.

Sixty years ago, before any railroad was built through this country, he wended his way through the timber of Wisconsin, or he was an immigrant from the Land of The Midnight Sun or some other European country. And he has seen that timber disappear before the axe of the sturdy woodsman and has seen these prairies blossom like the Garden of Eden under the tillage of the plowman.

All the joys and sorrows and hardships of pioneer life he experienced. All the pioneering vicissitudes that we read about and thrill over today, he lived—and recollects.

He knew at first-hand what life on the prairie in a dugout was like, the "gee-hawing" of his faithful oxen as he broke the first furrows of sod, the shooting of geese, which by the thousands alighted just near the ravine beyond his stable. And he calls these things affectionately back to recollection; while the cold, dread winters, the hard work, the terror that gripped hearts following the Indian outbreak, are tinged with memory's enchanted brush.

Through these years he has seen times change, men change, conditions change. Things that were became old, obsolete, and then relegated to oblivion. He has seen the ox at work; and then the horse depose the ox; the train and automobile gradually succeed the horse,

and now he is watching the airplane making an attempt to outstrip all other means of transportation.

He has seen electricity put to work for heat, light and power. He has seen the telephone lines stretch all over the country and has seen the radio become a reality. Comforts and conveniences that he has never, even in the most fantastic dreams, imagined practical or possible, he has seen become commonplace. He has witnessed progress, and yet—

Ever he looks back on those pioneer days with a feeling of tenderest affection. Those were busy years, sad years, glad years—each filled brim full of living.

What a wonderful example of courage and manhood is the Old Timer. What a heritage that pioneering must have given him. He can look back on days that to us seem filled only with hard work, long hours, tedious tasks, scant food, bitter cold, stark terror and few pleasures. And from all these he can recall only happy memories. His was a life dedicated to the building of this raw country into a good and prosperous community, worked with the modern conveniences we have today. We know it must have been a difficult and disheartening task many times. But before those days he retains only loving and pleasant memories. Even the hardships when looked back upon through the glass of memory, remain only adventures—pleasant to recall. No wonder we love THE OLD TIMER.

Author's note: The above "Old Timer" reflections was sent him by a young lady, the granddaughter of a Big Bend pioneer. As it fits in so splendidly with the work in hand, he is glad to give it space.

#### CONCLUSION

As I scan the pages of the prepared manuscript before handing it to The Milan Standard for publication, I realized with keen regret that it is sadly lacking in some features, mainly in the execution of the biographies of some of the worthy pioneers of the township. I made a sincere effort to obtain these and wrote a number of letters in the hope that the necessary data would be obtained, but very little cooperation was forthcoming. However, the matter prepared and published is, I believe, as accurate and truthful as it is humanly possible to make it. In looking back over the history of this beautiful township, dotted as it is with beautiful and happy homes, one can but marvel at the wonderful progress made. The pioneer settlers found an inland wilderness, without habitation, without railroads and surrounded by savages. What a change! The majority of the men and

women who came here by ox team sixty years ago to make a home for themselves and children have passed on, and the heritage they have left us in deeds, in courage and perseverance, in truthfulness, in honesty and clean, moral living is one to be revered and nurtured. To the unknown generations who will follow, and who, in their great advancement in the methods of government, the sciences, the arts, the inventions, discoveries and in the masteries of the powers of nature—these will perhaps look back upon the pioneers as a rude, ignorant and semi-barbarous people. Be that as it may, they can never get away from the fact that it was the pioneer who blazed the trail and made possible the American government with all that the name AMERICAN implies.

THE END.







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